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May 1995
Number 53

FIRST THINGS

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THE AFTERMATH

by Dean M. Kelley

The Strange Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe by Philip Zaleski

Preaching As Though We Had Enemies by Stanley Hauerwas

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

May 1995 / Number 53

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Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
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Associate Editor: *J. Bottum*
Poetry Editor: *Jill P. Baumgaertner*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $29 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. 1-800-783-4903. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870.

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FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

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Correspondence

Cult or Religion?

I rarely find anything in the pages of your journal that is mean-spirited and ungenerous, but I'm afraid that cannot be said of Benjamin Wittes' opinion piece, "The Scent of a Cult" (January).

The burden of this piece is that there are stigmata by which one can distinguish a "cult" (a pejorative term, apparently) from a "religion." The distinguishing characteristics are the seven traits enumerated by the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) plus those added by Wittes, namely: the greater "vigor" (enthusiasm?) with which cults exhibit such traits, and Orwellian "doublethink" (the confusion and obfuscation of language in order to disorient the critical faculties). However, from the examples given, I would rather conclude that the distinction, if there is one, is between a mature religion and a religion in its birth stages.

Let's take Christianity at its uterine stage of development and apply these test stigmata to it to see whether, in the eyes of a reasonable adherent of a mainstream religion at the time of Jesus (a Sadducee or Pharisee, for example), they might apply to Jesus, his followers while He lived, and to the Christian communities that sprang up after His death and Resurrection in various parts of the Roman world. First, the seven criteria of CAN:

1. Mind control—Based on the account given in the Gospels, there can be little doubt that the Sadducees and Pharisees regarded Jesus not only as a heretic but as one who possessed a mysterious, almost demonic, mind control over the poor souls who followed Him blindly and without reason.

2. Charismatic leadership—His contemporaries certainly would have described Jesus as a "charismatic leader" if they had a similar term in their vocabulary. Why? Because it must have seemed to them that part of Jesus' effect on his following sprang from the force of His character and the dramatic way He taught and punctuated His teachings with the performance of "miracles."

3. Deception—Jesus' critics also considered Him deceptive and dangerous in spreading false doctrines "out of the mainstream" at the very time that Judea and Israel most needed religious and cultural unity against an alien invader (John 11:47-48).

4. Exclusivity—Jesus did advise those who followed Him to turn their backs on unbelieving family members and friends while devoting themselves wholly to the community of believers and to those still open to receiving the Truth, while rejecting the traps of the World outside the community (Matthew 11:35-37; Luke 12:51-53).

5. Alienation—Same comment as above.

6. Exploitation—Jesus' advice to wealthier converts to share their wealth and patrimony with the poor (many of His followers were poor) or to divest themselves of it entirely (Mark 10:21; Matthew 19:21; Luke 18:22) could have been viewed by the family and friends of these converts as "exploitative" of their yearning for salvation and redemption, much as would parents today under similar circumstances.

7. Totalitarian worldview—As I understand this term, it means a worldview of followers of a doctrine which teaches that *every aspect of their lives* is governed by that doctrine; there is no life outside it, only corrupting influences, the lure of Satan. Jesus taught this often (see scriptural citations in #4, above), as did His Apostles.

The distinctions favored by Wittes, based on the Orwellian concept of "doublethink," will not hold water either. The early stages of any religion are always marked by seemingly inconsistent statements made by the Founder, which are subject to various interpretations; and this was as true of early Christianity as it is today of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church. It took three centuries of continual argument and disputation to hammer out a consistent doctrine and message for Christianity, and even that agree-

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ment was only partial.

Misuse of language is also not an appropriate criterion because words are frequently used in many different ways and there is nothing particularly nefarious about the practice. Wittes' own example of a misused term—the word "family"—is an instance of this: spiritual "family" as opposed to kinship "family," "families" of biological species, language "families," etc. As for Rev. Moon's use of the term, "family" in the spiritual sense to refer to members of his Church, compare Christ in Mark 3:33-35. The early Christians used many Greek words to express ideas in their belief system that differed greatly from the original Greek meanings or from ordinary usage. I doubt that they intended to confuse or mislead anybody, but this raises the essential question when dealing with a charge of misusing or corrupting language: what is the intent of the person doing so? How can you tell when a new use for an old term to describe a new idea is intended to mislead or confuse?

My disposition in these matters is to be tolerant of religious "cults," no matter how farcical I may think their beliefs to be, so long as they are sincere in believing them and as long as the Founder or organizational successors are not confidence men consciously exploiting the credulity of their followers for power, profit, or tax breaks. But these things must be *proved* to my satisfaction, not merely *alleged*. The reason for this disposition is that the parallels between the hostility that some of these modern "cults" are receiving and that which Jesus and his followers received from the "mainstream religions" of His day are just too many not to leave me with a feeling that we may just commit a horrid mistake again when Christ returns, as He said He would. . . .

Barton L. Ingraham
Santa Fe, NM

I am indeed surprised that the editors of your highly regarded journal considered it appropriate to publish "The Scent of a Cult." Benjamin Wittes failed to introduce any compelling case for his argument that greater distinctions ought to be made between groups he considers cults and those he considers religions. He fell far short in this regard, but did succeed in proving that those who seek to further divide the religious community need to be confronted and repudiated, not published.

Did not the fact that Benjamin Wittes cites as his primary resource the Cult Awareness Network send off alarm bells in the offices of First Things? What Wittes generously refers to as "a Chicago-based clearinghouse of information on cults" is in fact an organization that has been condemned by most of the established religious community for its abusive and illegal activities, albeit conducted in the name of "cult-busting."

CAN's definition of a "cult," though sounding neat and scientific, has in fact very liberal and malleable applications. CAN's Steve Hassan characterized the spiritual group that Arianna Huffington purportedly belonged to *and* the Jehovah's Witnesses as cults on Ted Koppel's *Nightline* (October 4, 1994). In 1987, at a CAN conference in Trenton, New Jersey, Hassan characterized the Catholic Church as "the greatest cult in America." CAN's executive director, Cynthia Kisser, gave testimony in a custody dispute in North Carolina in 1993 that a member of The Way International was an unfit mother because of her religious affiliation. An appeals court in that case threw out her testimony.

Not satisfied with CAN's criteria for what a cult is, Wittes goes further and submits as definitive proof of cultic affiliation the propensity for cultists to engage in "doublethink." His corroborative proof of the Unification Church's guilt in this regard is an alleged comment I made to a reporter some time last year. I have no recollection of this interview and can only surmise that it was not one that focused on the deepest aspects of Unification theology. But my response certainly does not support Wittes' argument that Unificationists practice "doublethink." If anything, my response indicates that I considered the answer to the question required something more than a convenient sound bite.

Mr. Wittes' second scurrilous attack on the Unification Church is his reechoing of the CAN line that the church "urges new recruits to cut off contact with their biological families (parents in particular)." This is a lie. It is the natural instinct of most people to share something new and precious with those they love the most. That was my inclination when I first encountered the Unification Church, and my family, all of whom are devout Catholics, will testify to that. The sensational allegations of family disruption reported occasionally in the media have all the substance and credibility of the "apostate atrocity tales" that abound in the literature of anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Mormonism. Those few and unrepresentative cases that do display extreme family fallout as a result of a family member associating with the Unification Church are products, from my own observations, of pre-existing family problems which are then exasperated and exploited by the proponents of the faith-breaking industry. . . .

Wittes persistently perpetuates the offensive epithet "Moonie" to refer to members of the Unification Church. He shamelessly engages in the use of sweeping stereotypes to describe those he disdains (examples: "the sadists and megalomaniacs who run most cults"; "most cults systematically malnourish their members"; and, "most Americans, properly, intuit a difference between the Scientologists and the Moonies on the one hand and the Lubavichers on the other"). This is prima facie evidence of his predisposed hostility towards those of a faith different from his own. It is bias that causes Wittes to falter in offering any coherent or logical arguments to support his emotional tirades. For example, he writes: "The difference between a cult and a religion, of course, lies in extremity. Cults generally exhibit all seven of the CAN's criteria, while religions generally don't, and cults exhibit them with far greater vigor than religions do." Is Wittes implying that cults are doing

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a wrong similar to that propagated by religions in general, the only difference being one of degree? Or does he mean to criticize cults because they are more fervent and constant in their religious faith and bring the full application of their religious beliefs to the public square? . . .

Peter D. Ross
Director of Public Affairs
The Unification Church
New York, NY

While I commend Benjamin Wittes for attempting to establish a "test" by which a religion can be differentiated from a cult, as a former missionary with the Unification Church (1973 to 1984), I can state with the certainty of experience that he has misapplied his measure in regards to that particular *religion*. The Unification Church, for all of its failings, does not engage in doublethink—though antagonists, and particularly antagonistic journalists, have often leveled that accusation based on superficial analysis and irresponsible quotation. Mr. Wittes' article is a case in point.

Though one may disagree with both the theology and its conclusions, there can be no doubt about the meaning of the word *Messiah* in Unification doctrine and no doubt that Reverend Moon is considered by Church faithful to be the Second Coming of the Messiah prophesied in Revelation. In Unification doctrine, the Messiah is the "anointed one" who has been called by God to realize the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by restoring all of mankind to the ideal God intended prior to the fall. Contrary to Mr. Wittes' assertion, this principle is both coherently and consistently presented throughout Unification doctrine. . . .

Mr. Wittes also misrepresents that "the Moonies have rendered meaningless a series of words connected to family." Unification Church members use the terms "brother and sister" in the same manner and with the same affection that their other Christian *brethren* use those terms. Mr. Wittes' could just as easily be leveling this criticism against the Trappists or Jesuits. The reference to "true parents," though a uniquely Unificationist term, likewise has its origins solidly within the gospels and the Christian doctrine of salvation through spiritual rebirth.

The Unification Church has in the past suggested its members pass through a period of separation from their families in order to solidify faith and make the transition to a more spiritual life easier. If Mr. Wittes is unfamiliar with this Christian practice, I suggest that he try more closely reading the gospels and the Church Fathers. Moreover, to imply that this break with one's family is to be permanent is either an ill-informed assumption or an inexcusable misrepresentation. While I was in the Unification Church, I heard Reverend Moon instruct the member countless times in widely disseminated speeches to pray for, to contact, and to visit their families. Members were repeatedly told that they should return to their hometowns and start what the Unificationists call "Home Church." Finally, Church literature does not mislead by emphasizing "family values" as asserted by Mr. Wittes. The goal of each and every Unificationist *is* to start his own "traditional nuclear family"—after first passing through a period of spiritual formation and public service. . . .

Jeffrey C. Scharfen
Rancho Santa Fe, CA

. . . How does a writer who manifestly lacks even elementary training in theology or the history of Christian thought, and who in this day and age acknowledges CAN (CAN!) as a legitimate resource make his way into First Things? . . .

At first I could only imagine that something is going on that does not immediately meet the eye. Is it satire? Some strategy to attract letters? Am I missing something? If so, I am embarrassed. I missed the obvious ploy. The joke's on me.

Who on earth uses the word "Moonies" in public discourse anymore? To my knowledge every major organ from ABC News to the *New York Times* has issued public apologies to Unificationists for having used the racist and bigoted epithet. How are Jews and blacks referred to in the pages of First Things? . . .

Frank Kaufmann
New York, NY

Now that you have opened up the horizon of First Things to theo-journalism, I though you might be interested in another submission along the same lines as Mr. Wittes' "The Scent of a Cult."

The Scent of a Papist

It might seem perverse for honestly religious people to group their clergy with those pedophiles and drunkards who run most Catholic parishes, but a growing number are doing just that. A substantial sector of religious America, for example, sees the rights of Catholic priests as equal in value to those of ministers. According to the commonly accepted criteria for defining clergy, the line between ministers and priests is fuzzy indeed, even under the scrutiny of the Catholic Awareness Network (CAN).

Do priests claim authority over congregants' personal lives? So do ministers. Do priests present themselves as able to forgive sin? Ministers often do the same. Do priests all think and talk alike? So do a lot of ministers. Do priests systematically molest young boys? Well, it happens in Protestant churches as well. Are priests all addicted to alcohol? Many ministers have the same problem. Do priests parrot religious propaganda designed to deaden free thought? So do ministers.

The difference between a destructive papist and a minister, of course, lies in extremity. Destructive papists generally exhibit all seven of the deadly sins, while ministers generally don't, and priests exhibit them with far greater vigor than ministers do. . . .

Now, the quickest way to detect a destructive hierarchy is to sniff for doublethink. The priest seeks control over his membership not by providing a coherent theological system but by providing the opposite: an unstable theology infinitely malleable to the needs of his hierarchy and uninterpretable at all times to anyone below that level.

Their use of the word "infallible"

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provides a case in point. The way the popes and priests twist it to suit their purposes is well-documented. . . .

The destructive papists have likewise rendered meaningless a series of words connected to family. The clergy call each other "brother" and "sister" and members are made to call them "father" and "mother." The Pope calls himself the "holy father." At the same time, every Catholic order tells new monastics to cut off contact with their biological families. Yet even as they interrupt normal family relations and appropriate the authority of parents, church literature refers to family values, clearly referring not to the church family but to the traditional nuclear family.

The Catholic "church" is no more a subset of religion than it is a subset of political parties. While priests orient themselves around religious language and behavior, and can thus appear to resemble a religious or spiritual leader, these destructive papists actually constitute a phenomenon of their own. Of course, we must protect the constitutional rights of Catholic priests. I wouldn't *dream* of doing anything to undermine their right to protection. It would be a grave error, however, to conclude that all who come under that protection have anything more in common than the protection itself.

* * *

Of course, I submit this piece knowing full well that the Catholic Church is a well-established presence in this country. I would not want it published in a country in which Roman Catholics were a small minority already marginalized by the media and commonly enduring persecution. No Christian editor, I'm sure, would publish it under those circumstances in any case.

Jonathan Gullery
Ossining, NY

Benjamin Wittes' "The Scent of a Cult" displays an ignorance and animus more characteristic of the Inquisition than of your usually fine publication.

I will pass over his uncritical repetition of the anti-cultist litany of the supposed horrors of new religions. The "systematically malnourished" cultists whom I know from the groups that he mentions buy their own groceries. I would caution Wittes to remember the history of religious bigotry, where similar accusations, repeated over and over again by respected prelates, encouraged pogroms, witch-burnings, and the slaughter of heretics. Did the modern anti-cult litany, by demonizing the Branch Davidians, play any part in the government's willingness to put them to a modern auto-da-fé? . . .

Wittes is particularly exercised that the Unification Church has a different definition of Messiah than that of traditional Christianity. But is that not a tautology? After all, the Unification Church is not a traditional Christian church. The National Council of Churches questioned its view of the Messiah in the context of a judgment as to whether the church could be accepted as a Christian church. We have here, to be sure, a typical intramural dispute among religions. But as such, it has no bearing upon the internal logical consistency of the Unificationists' doctrines. If the measure of a cult is whether a group's teachings conflict with those of traditional Christianity, then logic drives us back to embrace Wittes' antithesis: "The only difference between a cult and a religion is a hundred years." . . .

Andrew Wilson
New York, NY

I can confirm Benjamin Wittes' observations about the peculiarly mercurial nature of "Moonie" theology and terminology. I was a follower of Sun Myung Moon for ten years, from 1976 to 1986, and during that time I was often called upon to use words in a deliberately dual sense, with one meaning intended for public consumption and the other (often conflicting) meaning meant to be understood by insiders only. Nowhere was this more evident than in the church's ambivalent view of Jesus Christ. A Unificationist would not hesitate to say that "Jesus is Lord" in the sense of a master or great individual, but Unification theology specifically rules out the idea that Jesus and God are the same being—which must surely be what Christians intend by the term "Lord." The ambivalence is deliberate. Rev. Moon teaches that ultimately all Christians will "accept" him as the Messiah; therefore, he does not wish to offend them by making it too clear what he actually thinks of Jesus.

In praising family values and traditional marriage, too, the Unification Church engages in a form of doublethink. While most Unificationists would leap to attention at the mere mention of these icons of the religious right, their own families are often split up quite willfully by Rev. Moon whenever he sees fit to do so. It is a part of church lore that Rev. Moon used to "call up" mothers with small children in Korea during the early days of the church. These women were then sent out to do "front line" activities such as proselytizing for the church while their children were dropped into the laps of relatives or kept in church childcare facilities for weeks or months. This practice has been followed in the United States on occasion.

Even the term "Moonie" itself, which is now hotly detested by Rev. Moon's followers, was once an acceptable word within the church. In the early 1980s, a T-shirt was made available to Unification Church members that read, "I'm a Moonie and I (heart symbol) it!" The Unification Church only declared war on the term "Moonie" around 1986, just as I was leaving the organization. They did so because Rev. Moon had changed his strategy and was backing away from the proselytization campaigns that had generated so much negative publicity in the late 1970s. Instead, the Unification Church chose to go "underground," by creating many proxy organizations with bland, inoffensive-sounding names such as the "Women's Federation for World Peace." In order to obscure the ties of these organizations to Sun Myung Moon, it became a priority to anathematize succinct terms like "Moonie" whenever they appear in newspaper headlines or articles. All

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of a sudden, followers of Rev. Moon who had once jokingly referred to each other as "Moonies" now found that they simply could not bear to hear such an abusive, degrading term. In a recent article published in *Gauntlet* magazine, Unification Church spokesman Peter D. Ross likened the word to "nigger," "kike," and "fag."

Mr. Wittes' article manages to capture with an admirable economy of words this peculiar feature of cults that sets them apart from more mainstream religions. By laying claim to the definition of words, they seek to make it impossible for members even to formulate the thought of rebellion. I have never seen it defined more aptly, except perhaps in George Orwell's *1984*: "In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it."

K. Gordon Neufeld
Vancouver, British Columbia

Benjamin Wittes replies:

It looks like the Unification Church really called out the troops on this one. I apologize if the term "Moonie" clouds the issues I've tried to raise, but with that possible exception, I stand 100 percent behind my piece. As a matter of principle, I never argue about cults with people who are institutionally enmeshed with one or who refuse to specify the nature of their interest in defending a particular cult organization. Rather, I thank K. Gordon Neufeld for his very moving testimony, which more than answers for the integrity of my interpretations and the accuracy of my conclusions.

School Prayer

I must express my disagreement with your editorial in the February 1995 issue concerning a school prayer amendment to the United States Constitution. While I am in full accord with many of your arguments—including the dangers of an imperial federal judiciary, the evils of "naked public square" thinking, and the incoherence of current Supreme Court religion clause decisions—I think that your conclusion with respect to this particular problem misses the mark.

With all due respect, the issue is not whether there will be "voluntary prayer" in public schools; nor is it federalism and home rule. The real issue is whether public school teachers, agents of state and local government, themselves holding religious views as diverse as any other large national group of citizens, should be permitted to lead impressionable children in classroom devotional exercises. Should Christians trust public school teachers to influence the religious beliefs of their children? More to the point of your editorial, should each state or each local community be permitted to decide whether teachers will be given this opportunity and responsibility? My answer is "no" to both questions.

How would various local communities respond if given the decision? My guess is that those places with very diverse religious populations, where no one group would feel confident of its status as majority religion (New York or Los Angeles, perhaps), would reject teacher-led devotions. In those places where one religious tradition constitutes a strong majority (say, Salt Lake City), in-class prayer/devotions might well be approved by a majority of voters. A majority vote would not change the wrongness of the decision. A religious minority, whether it constitutes 49 percent or .0001 percent of the population, should not be forced to subject its children to offensive religious exercises in the government-run schools. No matter how much you try to structure classroom devotions as "voluntary," peer pressure and the authority role of teachers will always place strong incentives on children who do not share the majority religious sentiment to hide their discomfort and join in with the group.

This does not mean that a constitutional amendment dealing with religious activity in the public schools would necessarily be a bad thing. There are many forms of school-related religious expression that, although probably already protected by the First Amendment, the Equal Access Act, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, create significant confusion and censorship among school officials. These would include individual student expression (religious-message clothing, private prayer, dialogue with other students, religious topics for class assignments, etc.), Equal Access student groups, released time religious education, moments of silence for truly voluntary prayer or meditation, and perhaps student-controlled prayer at graduation exercises. In all of these areas, teachers and administrators need to know beyond any doubt that private religious expression is constitutionally protected, and the law needs to be clear that "high walls of separation" under state constitutions cannot trump federally protected rights.

The distinction between individual action and government action is critical. Because the First Amendment is a limitation on government activity, there is nothing that a private citizen (such as a student) can do to unconstitutionally establish religion or prevent free exercise. Government schools and their employees, however, can violate the nonestablishment clause and do so whenever they encourage one religious tradition or expression over others.

Bradley P. Jacob
Center for Law and Public Policy
Geneva College
Beaver Falls, PA

Thanks for taking a straightforward, intelligent stand on the prayer amendment. You've certainly convinced me.

There is one troubling point, however, involving your calling the desirable alternative to wrongheaded judicial rule simply "democracy," a term that we should all know by now was thoroughly understood by the Founders and wisely rejected. (Fortunately, you tend to offset this error elsewhere.) This may seem nit-picking, but I believe that to continue repeating the slightest misconception that we are a "democracy," an idea which has been largely encouraged by the same courts you criticize and in fact lies behind many of their

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erroneous judgments (along with the idea of "equality"), can only cause further harm. Many esteemed writers, I believe, might agree. I know Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn's *Liberty or Equality* backs me up, as would Russell Kirk, M. E. Bradford, Irving Babbitt (*Leadership and Democracy*), etc.

"Democratic capitalism," "democratic self-government," "democratic process," etc. are all within accepted parameters, but when decisions are "made by thousands of communities and local school boards across the country," it is called *decentralization* and *federalism*, not "democracy." The gong-show California initiative process is probably "democracy" but it is not our characteristic form of government. "Democracy" was not the goal of the U.S. Constitution, so let's not apotheosize it. . . .

W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, CA

Your editorial about school prayer misses the obvious. The Constitution may not contain any mention of school prayer by name, but it *does* mention that the government may not establish a religion.

The question now becomes does *imposed* school prayer (one could and can always pray voluntarily and individually in school) establish a religion, or go in that direction?

The answer has got to be "yes" *if* the prayer is to Jesus, Allah, Krishna, etc. Then it gives government sanction to a specific religion. The critical thing that your editorial also fails to discuss is whether any prayer led by or instituted by a school (as an arm of the government) could really be viewed as "voluntary." Who is to compose these prayers, and what will guarantee that they do not favor a particular religion? The task of being neutral would seem to be almost impossible, and the lack of a mechanism to assure voluntary participation in the prayers only by those who wish to do so is a daunting one.

Gordon Stein
Free Inquiry
Amherst, NY

Whose Aquinas?

In his excellent article "Toward a Post-Apollonian Theology" (January), Pastor Peter J. Leithart misunderstands Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.

Aristotle was attempting to prove God's existence from reason alone, unaided by divine revelation. Thomas Aquinas, in his proofs for the existence of God in the *Summa Theologiae*, was again presenting what reason alone is capable of proving. Further on in the *Summa* Aquinas takes up what God has revealed about His triune nature, and he argues that this is something that human reason could never arrive at on its own. However fitting it may be that God exists as three Persons, without His self-revelation our reason can arrive at little more than that He is the ultimate cause of some observed effect.

On the other hand, it is truly marvelous that Aristotle saw that inasmuch as God is the cause of all being, He cannot be in need of any created thing. The human intellect simply cannot see any reason why God should have created us, much less why He should care about us. In the words of the Psalmist (8:5), "What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You should care for him?" That God is love, and what that might mean, might enter in some feeble way into the mind of a poet or a holy man, but it could never be proved by rational argument.

That God exists is not a marvel, it is only a simple fact without which nothing else would exist. That we exist and that He cares about us, in a totally disinterested manner, i.e., without the possibility of any real gain on His part, that is the marvel of marvels! Those who have not received God's revelation, or who have rejected it, can never know this truth.

E. William Sockey, III
Thomas Aquinas College
Santa Paula, CA

Peter J. Leithart replies:

Mr. Sockey's letter betrays the same theological errors I find in Aquinas. Both claim that natural theology is true as far as it goes, but needs to be supplemented by special revelation because of the limits of human reason. Paul wrote, on the contrary, that God has revealed Himself clearly in creation, but that sinners suppress and distort the truth (Romans 1:18-32). Aristotle's theology, by Paul's diagnosis, was the product of suppression and distortion; though such a theology may occasionally stumble on the truth, fundamentally it is not merely limited but false. The unmoved mover is simply not the God Christians worship. It is not true, moreover, that Aristotle was "unaided by divine revelation." It would be more correct to say that he was unaided by special revelation, though most of the Church Fathers expressed doubts even about that.

Profound Dialectic

I found "The Zionist Imperative" by Emil L. Fackenheim (February) compelling and incisive both as regards its historical awareness and breadth and as regards its well-reasoned and decisive conclusions. It is not mere coincidence that a number of profound dialectics that are only seemingly unresolvable are presented in this article: the particular and the universal, the secular and the spiritual, action and reflection, the mundane and the miraculous, horror that enervates faith and profound insight that reillumines faith despite the multiplicity of reasons to suppress it.

It is the putatively unresolvable nature of these dialectics that so confounds and disturbs the Arab/Israeli peace process specifically and the modern and postmodern world in general. Yet Fackenheim weaves, like a golden thread, through all the expedient and casuistic rationales and in doing so emphasizes the extreme consequences and dangers in failing to do so. . . .

Michael Bond
Lakewood, CO

Renewing Your License

Christopher Wolfe in "The Marriage

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of Your Choice" (February) advocates legislation to make it possible for a couple to choose to enter freely into an indissoluble marriage. I would like to propose an idea of my own.

I would make the marriage license valid for only a stated period of time, like a driver's license. At the end of the period, say four years, it would expire unless renewed by both parties. For the stated period the marriage would be indissoluble, with only separation legally possible. This arrangement, like present laws, would have no effect on one's religious belief that marriage is for life and divorce impossible.

This arrangement would have several effects. It would force couples to deliberately renew their covenant if they wished their marriage to continue. If they did not, it would die quietly without all the mess and expense of a legal divorce. They could make their own arrangements about children and property.

Over time, couples who renewed their marriage license might want to make the time longer, say ten years or the rest of their life. Perhaps some state might try this as an experiment. The results could not be worse than they are now.

Charles J. Robbins
St. Joseph's College
Rensselaer, IN

Murdoch the Moralist?

Alan Jacobs, in "Iris Murdoch's Go(o)d" (February) notes with palpable discomfort the recent efforts of a conference of scholars "to investigate and celebrate the theological importance of the writings, *especially the novels*, of Iris Murdoch" (emphasis added).

Few contemporary novelists or philosophers (and Murdoch is both) embrace an orthodox faith, and she is evidently no exception. From this must we conclude, ipso facto, that no spiritual insight can be gleaned from their works?

People of faith who confine their search for spiritual significance in fiction to the writings of professing believers will find themselves working off a rather short reading list. Fortunately, we need not be so confined. Chalk this up, perhaps, to the Holy Spirit—to the tendency of truth to bubble to the top of an inspired and accomplished literary broth.

As luck would have it, I was reading Murdoch's *The Time of the Angels* (1966) when Jacobs' article came to my attention. The Spirit (I would submit) permeates the pages of *Angels*. Consider Murdoch's Leo and Muriel: two young freethinkers discussing *life*. Leo is rebellious and hedonistic; Muriel is "experienced," but thoughtfully so:

> "Yes, I'm an aesthetic type. I have no morals. You don't believe in God and all that crap, do you?"
>
> "No," said Muriel. "Though that's not the same as having no morals."
>
> "It is, you know. I'm one of the problems of the age. . . ."

While noting that Murdoch's "reputation rests chiefly on her twenty-five [!] novels," Jacobs is preoccupied with her philosophical writings. Prof. Jacobs, an English teacher, should have stuck to the novels. It is these that will be read in the next century—these that should be read today.

George G. Peery III
Annandale, VA

It would be amazing indeed if a philosopher of some ability were to assure us of the objectivity and independence of goodness for five hundred pages, and then on page 506 "give the game away" and turn out to be merely a subjectivist about the good after all. Especially when the philosopher writes on page 508 that our "experience of the reality of good is not like an arbitrary and assertive resort to our own will; it is a discovery of something independent of us, where that independence is essential."

Yet that is just what Alan Jacobs assures us is the case in Iris Murdoch's book, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. The offending passage, moreover, immediately follows Murdoch's assertions that "art and high thought and difficult moral discernment appear as creation *ex nihilo*, as *grace*. The *Meno* concludes that virtue does not come by nature, nor is it teachable, but comes by divine dispensation." Something must be wrong.

And indeed, it is not hard to find an interpretation of the passage Jacobs cites that squares with the general theme (and title) of the book. Murdoch is here talking about the experience of the artist or thinker who "concentrates on the problem, grasps it as a problem with some degree of clarity, and waits." Then something comes "out of the dark of non-being, as a reward for loving attention" (p. 505). What comes? The poem, the solution to the equation, the resolution of the difficulty. Without such "loving care," nothing good, nothing beautiful can be achieved. That is the sense in which "the good artist, the true lover, the dedicated thinker, the unselfish moral agent . . . can create the object of love."

It is not, as Jacobs would have it, that *the Good* "exists [only] insofar as it is worshipped." Murdoch's claim at this point is that *existing good things* (particular truths, works of art, moral acts) depend as much on the "spiritual energy" of the agent as on that mysterious—and independent—source of all good things.

Murdoch's book is difficult, as the writings of mystics usually are. But no one should be deterred from its rewards by mistaking it as a mask for pragmatism or subjectivism. It is worlds away from both.

Norman Melchert
Easton, PA

I greatly enjoyed Alan Jacobs' *"Iris Murdoch's Go(o)d."* He's right: compared with most other "serious" novelists on either side of the Atlantic, Murdoch is a commanding talent. However, given the current state of "literary" fiction, that's not saying all that much. It's easy to be less sloppy than John Updike and still be quite undisciplined. It's easy to be less depressed than Joan Didion and still be far from hopeful. If, by comparison with most of her contemporaries,

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to say nothing of the new generation of novelists now coming into print, Murdoch provides a "fresh and exciting alternative," that fact says more about standards in fiction overall than about any standards Murdoch may have set for herself. . . .

Brawn Sullivan
Marysville, CA

Alan Jacobs replies:

When George C. Peery claims that spiritual insight can be gained from the writings of unbelievers, or people of unorthodox beliefs, does he expect me to disagree? But when he suggests that one must choose between Murdoch's philosophy and her fiction, there I must demur. I don't see why we can't read both.

Norman Melchert is right to point out passages from Murdoch's book that could lend themselves to a different interpretation than mine, and I thank him for his thoughtful response. But I am not convinced by his reading. If Murdoch is merely saying that our "spiritual energy" is necessary for good things to happen in the world, and believes that there is some ultimate "source" for those good things, then why does she return repeatedly to the theme of *creating* the good? Is she just sloppy in her use of words? For surely it is not difficult to distinguish an energetic and imaginative *response* to goodness from the *creation* of it. Moreover, if Murdoch believes in a "mysterious source" of goodness, why does she say, in a passage Professor Melchert quotes, that the reward for goodness comes "out of the dark of *non-being*?" Can non-being be a source of anything? What I understand Murdoch to be saying in the passages Professor Melchert refers to is that goodness has no source, does not exist prior to our creation of it, but *becomes* independent of us *after* we create it. It goes out into the world and, if accepted by others, has meaningful effects. That is why I identify Murdoch with those modern artists who seek a "supreme fiction," that is, a metanarrative which we know to be our own creation but which we choose to live by and subject ourselves to.

What Price Ecumenism?

I look forward eagerly to the "roundup and commentary" on developments concerning the declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (foretold in "While We're At It," January). The declaration has generated, if nothing else, an enormous volume of extremely interesting conversation, printed and otherwise, all of which has given reflective Christians much to chew on.

In the meantime, I am compelled to comment on Richard John Neuhaus' review of Pope John Paul II's new best-seller, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (The Public Square, January). It can hardly come as a surprise that many Catholics and evangelicals are uneasy about the declaration, calling as it does for ecumenical convergence, both theologically and programmatically, when they read here of the Pope's theological perspectives, intended, we must assume, as the official teachings of the Catholic Church. I confess that I have not read the book, and yet I trust that Neuhaus is giving us a balanced and generally dependable, if incomplete, account of its contents.

I refer in particular to several passages in which Neuhaus recounts the Pope's views on ecumenism and on soteriology. First, ecumenism. Many evangelicals note that the original declaration says very little about the Reformation, and in fact leaves much unsaid about the three great "sola" cries of the Reformers. For many Protestants, *sola gratia, sola fide,* and *sola scriptura* capture the central biblical truths that are the heart of the faith, and without which there is no truly Christian—and certainly no truly evangelical—faith. On this view, the *solas* constitute a great theological divide between Protestants and Catholics that no amount of progressive convergence can or should remove.

Consider, then, this passage from Neuhaus, including his quotation from *Crossing*: "The healing of the breach between Rome and the Reformation requires an appreciation of a 'certain dialectic' in how the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. 'It is necessary for humanity to achieve unity through plurality, to learn to come together in the one Church, even while presenting a plurality of ways of thinking and acting, of cultures and civilization.' Divisions, then, may have served a purpose, but that does not justify continuing divisions that do not serve the truth."

With these few words, the distinctive faith of the Reformers, resting on the biblical pillars of *sola gratia, sola fide,* and *sola scriptura,* is thrown onto the pile of divisions that do not serve the truth—unless, of course, Neuhaus and the Pope intend to repair the cleavage by affirming the *solas* themselves. The concern of many Protestant evangelicals—that the price of the proposed ecumenism is the renunciation of the great biblical truths of the Reformation—appears, in spite of the placations of J. J. Packer and others, to be well-grounded. I can only imagine that many Catholics, well aware of the Council of Trent, will be similarly suspicious of the cost Catholic teaching will likewise pay for the proposed theological convergence.

Niel Nielson
Wheaton, IL

Unfair Treatment?

How to complain without whining—more easily said than done, but I must say that the treatment I have received at the hands of the First Things editorial staff has been anything but "ecumenical." First, in a "briefly noted" book review of *Beyond Culture Wars* (October 1994) the reviewer spent more time lamenting my "strident Reformed view of Protestant orthodoxy" in connection with Christians United for Reformation (CURE) than in dealing with the content of the book. Richard John Neuhaus added another log in February (The Public Square—While We're At It section): "Being unecumenical can be fun. Who doesn't miss something in the bare-knuckled religious polemics of yesteryear?" Next, *Catholic Answers* is said to have "struck up a polemical friendship" with me. "Mr. Horton is hard-core Calvinist and what he and *Catholic Answers* have in common, aside from

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the pleasure of polemics, is a strong dislike for the declaration 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together.'" "If that declaration is right," he concludes, "it might take a lot of fun out of bashing each other."

I mean, really. Who is getting "a lot of fun out of bashing each other" after all?

What CURE and *Catholic Answers* have in common is not "the pleasure of polemics," but a passion for what we believe to be life-and-death issues of truth. Since *Catholic Answers* is defending Roman Catholic teaching (including Vatican II) and CURE is affirming classical Protestant teaching, neither group is engaging in outrageous behavior: we simply stand with our confessions. And since Fr. Neuhaus has the experience of having been both a confessional Protestant and now a Roman Catholic, his ecumenical agenda should surely have room for us. But, alas, it does not. Where we have only criticized "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" on its own merit—without the slightest condescending ridicule for its authors—Fr. Neuhaus has offered merely the latter to his critics.

As for my own views, let me set the record straight: I am a confessional Protestant who believes that the Gospel that was proclaimed by Luther, Calvin, and their ilk is identical to that announced in Scripture. In spite of fruitful dialogue, the Roman Catholic position (evidenced in the new Catechism) reaffirms Trent, and the "evangel" of "evangelicalism"—justification *sola fide*—has yet to be embraced by any official magisterial declaration. I do not, however, believe that this has to be the end of the story. With brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church I too long for reconciliation, as we both come to understand the greatest news ever heard, but some of us (Catholics and Protestants) still believe that a shallow understanding of the doctrinal issues can only lead to a shallow unity in the long run. I do not expect Fr. Neuhaus to agree, but in fairness I could have hoped that, in Christian charity, he would at least have tried to understand.

Michael Horton
Anaheim,CA

Richard John Neuhaus replies:

I have elsewhere in these pages noted that *Catholic Answers* wants it understood that it views "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" favorably. I not only agree but strongly agree with Mr. Horton that "a shallow understanding of the doctrinal issues can only lead to a shallow unity in the long run." In the short run, too. "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" says that—emphatically and repeatedly. As for the book, briefly noteds must be brief, and authors understandably think their book deserves more attention. Finally, I do, both in charity and in respect for truth, try to understand. Nothing in Mr. Horton's letter leads me to think that in this case I have not succeeded.

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THIS TIME

Getting the Fifties Right

James Nuechterlein

There's a lot of talk about the 1950s these days, but most of it seems not quite right.

Defenders and critics of the decade alike invoke it in support of their agendas for the nineties. Republicans recall the decade's virtues to buttress the case for their conservative program while liberal Democrats suggest that what was wrong with the fifties indicates what's wrong with the Contract With America—and with conservatism in general. That's all fair enough: the search for a usable past is a perennial subtext of political discourse. But as is so often the case in such matters, the history summoned to duty is somewhat off-center.

Present politics quite aside, my own partiality for the fifties is close to unqualified. Part of that, I confess, is nostalgia. I came of age in the fifties: at its beginning, I was confirmed in the Lutheran Church; at its end, I graduated from college. But there is more here than the personal: I do indeed endorse the politics of the fifties. But it's not quite the politics imagined by today's movement conservatives.

The conservatism of the fifties was a conservatism more of mood and temper than program. It was Burkean in that it relied on prudence over doctrine and on an unself-conscious rootedness in the traditions of the society. After the ideological extravagances of the thirties—Auden's "low, dishonest decade"—the broad national consensus on democratic capitalism quickly reasserted itself. Neither fascism nor communism had ever made sense here, and postwar Americans eagerly reclaimed their historic exceptionalism. The quintessential expression of political thought in the decade was Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*, which argued, persuasively if exaggeratedly, that classical liberalism was America's tradition and fate, that John Locke dominated American political culture as no political thinker dominated any society elsewhere. (It is often forgotten that Hartz was no participant in the presumed "American Celebration" of the fifties; he regretted the Lockean dominance that he reported.)

The consensus politics of the fifties was conservative, then, mainly in the sense that it was nonideological. It did not seek to extend the modest welfare/regulatory state of the New Deal, but neither did it wish to dismantle it. It agreed on anticommunism abroad and on the pursuit of prosperity at home. The era was, with the possible exception of the 1920s, as nonpolitical a decade as America has known in this century. In Dwight Eisenhower—the genial Ike—it found its classic nonpartisan expression. (And Eisenhower's opponents quarreled with him only at the margins. Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956, differed significantly from Eisenhower in style, but only modestly in substance.)

Today's conservatism is quite different. It is intensely ideological and partisan, and it reflects in spirit not the fifties but the sixties—if, to be sure, a sixties turned on its head. The new conservatives are the McGovernites of the right. They are the spiritual descendants of the William F. Buckley who founded *National Review* in 1955, and the *NR* of the fifties—very unlike today—was considered marginal, exotic, and curiously overheated. The difference between then and now is suggested by the fact that the *NR* of the nineties is the flagship journal of a counterrevolution looking to become the Establishment.

Left-wingers have their own misconceptions of the fifties. To them the decade was at once banal and reactionary, empty of ideas and dominated by McCarthyism and indifference to the oppression of blacks and women. There is a whisper of truth in that, but as a summary of the period it distorts matters beyond recognition.

The fifties was not at all unconcerned with ideas—it was in fact intellectually exuberant—but it didn't much involve itself with *political* ideas. Its leading thinkers had had enough of that during the ideology-ridden thirties, and they were quite happy to direct their primary intellectual interests elsewhere. That was a healthy instinct: a society that can conduct its political discourse within a broadly shared consensus, as America could in the fifties, should count its blessings, not berate itself for its lack of ideological curiosity.

That McCarthyism disfigured the decade cannot be denied. It was an entirely ugly episode. But it was just that—an episode, not, as revisionists would have it, the spirit of the age. (It can be made the latter only by conflating all manifestations of anticommunism with McCarthyism.) And McCarthy would not have gained the influence he did without the Korean War, whose outbreak in 1950 reawakened fears of Communist expansion and subversion. In other words, No Korea, No McCarthy, an equation confirmed by the fact that the end of his popularity—and he had never been all that popular to begin with—coincided with the end of the war in 1953. (He was censured by the U.S. Senate the following year.)

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None of this makes McCarthyism more palatable, but it does remind us of the simple fact that civil liberties do not ordinarily flourish in wartime.

On the issue of civil rights, the fifties made a start, if only a fainthearted one. (All political virtues have their corresponding vices, and the judicious moderation of the decade was offset by its absence of passion.) More should have been done to follow up politically on the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, though Eisenhower did, however reluctantly, employ federal troops to enforce a desegregation ruling in Little Rock, Arkansas. He also got Congress to pass a civil rights bill in 1957 that, however weak, was the first such legislation since 1875.

Inexorable pressures toward racial justice developed in the fifties, among blacks especially but also among whites. The lack of political intensity common in those who were young in the decade marked us as the Silent Generation, but on the issue of race we made an exception. We did not organize marches—marching was beyond our political ken—but we made in our hearts the case for marching that the following generation acted on. (Rather too indiscriminately, as it turned out. If we would not march for anything, they would march for everything.)

The final element in the leftist critique of the fifties—that it ignored the plight of women—is wholly anachronistic. Blacks in the decade overwhelmingly felt a sense of oppression; women overwhelmingly did not. If women were victims, they colluded massively in their own victimization. It took, ironically, an unprecedented expansion of choices for women later to experience the sensation of oppression that Betty Friedan wanted to make retroactive. Female contemporaries of mine often look back on the fifties and wonder, from this distance, how they felt as comfortable with its assumptions as they did, but most of them do not deny that they did, in fact, feel comfortable.

Whether we regard the fifties favorably or not, one thing is certain: there is no summoning it back. The past is indeed another country, and there is no way, except in memory, to travel there. It is tempting to suppose that we could by act of will reconstitute the decade's political sobriety, moral seriousness, and cultural cohesion. But the circumstances of the past can never be reassembled; we can only make the best of what we have to work with at the present moment.

Yet those of us who lived there may be allowed a moment's nostalgia for an era that, cautioned by memories of the culture war of the thirties, had the great good sense—and good fortune—not to get itself embroiled in another one. It is often charged that the fifties lacked political imagination. Yes, and that was only one of the good things about it. FT

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Opinion

The Dionysian Dialectic

John J. Savant

Euripides was on to something when he loosed an angry Dionysius on his protagonists. For Dionysius—the god who in his carnal vitality insists upon recognition—will not tolerate neglect or exclusion from our definitions of human nature. Indeed, he is the god who ravages all our dreams and systems when we root them in the airy insubstantiality of wish and vanity rather than in nature.

Volatile and dangerous, Dionysius was nevertheless a god. And so, for the Greeks, he was a source of spiritual revelation. But what he revealed was, strangely, the need for discipline and humility in the building of our lives: the need ever to consult *nature* in our assessments of what is human and humanly possible. This was an ambiguous, contrary, and tension-filled revelation, for what was revealed was both animal and spiritual, Dionysian and Apollonian.

Somehow (perhaps "original sin" enters here), we resent this tension, this ambiguity, this indetermination. We resent Dionysius and his goat-footed satyrs just behind our aspirations and taking residence, like some moral fifth column, in our hapless glands. We do not, of course, dismiss him in our assumptions or our systems any more than we dismiss the weather by donning a cap. But we *do* make him—or appear to make him—subservient to our more flattering self-perceptions, to our Apollonian pretensions.

In the Greek tradition, Dionysius must be, if not honored, at least respected. He is passion and energy and eros and exultation. He is the undifferentiated potential for both creativity and destruction. Without him, thinking is sterile, dreaming is pointless, and desiring is wishful.

It is not inaccurate to call Dionysius "nature"—though he is not all of nature. But he is that dimension of our humanity determined by our animality—by our physical senses and hungers and instincts; by our mere and insistent materiality; by our bulk and movement; by our gravity, our constant changing, our mortality. And not least by our distinctions in size and strength, in talent and beauty and gender.

Thus animal, Dionysius calls for celebration, for the joy of the body. But he also engenders fear—not simply fear of reversion to that nature we consciously try to transcend, nor fear of that latent and indiscriminate violence which he represents: but fear especially of the implications inherent in our physical distinctions. These implications suggest limitations and obligations not congenial to our self-perceptions, desires, and expectations. In brief, Dionysius is to be celebrated and feared for the very *nature* he represents—both that generic nature which identifies us as human (rational, animal, communal, moral, religious) and that particular nature which identifies us as individuals (sexual, psychological, historical).

For the Greeks these two levels of nature—generic and individual—existed in a creative tension that both defined individuality and enhanced community. Within the context of myth it was a tension that united temporal with spiritual, secular with transcendent, and Dionysian with Apollonian.

The full Dionysian/Apollonian integration remained, of course, an unreachable ideal. But as an ideal it *did* govern human thought, behavior, and value. It *did* hold all these up to nature—to that ineluctable tension and union between matter and spirit and, by extension, between biology and social function. For recognition of those individual distinctions that biology makes manifest (size, strength, gender, talent) was, for the Greeks, recognition of those communal roles and obligations attendant upon these distinctions.

Today, confronted by all-assuming secularism (gentled by seductive sentimentality), we ignore Dionysius in the pantheon of consciousness. Our minds turn to the shrine of their own divinity, to the apotheosis of their aspirations. Dionysius, when he does stir, plays no role in the larger vision and realizes no integration into the human venture. He serves, rather, for gratification, for periodic escape. He has become, not the tremendous and terrible steed trained upon some surpassing grail, but the pornographer of our vanity and the *magister ludi* of our periodic binges—a sort of pressure valve of the psyche.

If, then, the demotion of Dionysius is a corollary of our culture's psychic indulgence, it is also the symptom of our most pernicious, erosive, and potentially catastrophic inclinations. Ignoring the power, the limitations, and the obligations inherent in biology, we construct worlds out of mere ideas. We ignore those distinctions of gift and gender and function indicated by our generic and individual natures. We conjure systems to serve our imaginings. And our imaginings arise, not out of nature—out of what presents itself to our consciousness—but out of private impulse, need, and whimsy.

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But as Euripides was so well aware, we ignore Dionysius at tremendous peril. The beast sleeps in the bed chamber. He seems to doze through our dalliances. He lets us pet him and feed him with our occasional lusts. We forget he is clawed and fanged. We sleep confident and inattentive. And then the nightmares come: the sudden rage, the fear, the clenched fist, the indiscriminate victim, the race riot, the beaten spouse, the pogrom, the holocaust. Then come the autocrats of mind and value and taste to fill the moral vacuums where we have slept. The nightmare begins, and human culture teeters on the brink of its ignored animality. And all the while, the pampered mind plays its games and names its delusions: personal autonomy, economic efficiency, racial cleansing, mercy-killing, absolute rights over one's body, and so forth. It all comes off so smoothly, we hardly know the beast has cornered us—until, as ultimately happens, it is our turn to be victim.

How we got to this cataclysmic state is a matter of language—or, rather, of its manipulation. And the word most manipulated is "rights." We say we have a right to the most comfortable life possible. We say we have a right to the goods and wealth we may have amassed. We say we have a right to absolute jurisdiction over our bodies. We speak of these "rights" as though they derived not from the *nature* of our existing in a physical and social context but from the fact that we exist at all.

What we tragically fail to perceive here is that *the concept of rights is inseparable from the concept of otherness*—the otherness of the universe generally, and, more immediately, of our planet and our communities. If there were no other beings with whom to share life, perception, or property, there would be no murder, deceit, or theft. There would be no one to offend us, no one to offend.

Our rights, therefore, are inseparable from our condition as members of a community and participants in nature. But as soon as we admit this, we must admit Dionysius. For, aspiring and idealistic as we may be, we are undeniably and inexorably physical animals. As such, we must recognize the Dionysian in every private and social equation if we are truly to understand and serve the order we call "justice"—and that is, in fact, the only ground and embodiment of our rights. What the Dionysian myth tells us, therefore, is that our bodies are both ours and the community's; that our gifts, our limitations, and our genders must serve public as well as private ends; that, as with the highly individual pieces in a mosaic, our fullest identities are realized only within the context of a whole that is larger than ourselves and ourselves writ large. The myth further tells us that property, though it may most fruitfully be private, may never be absolute; that power, though expressive of self, must serve more than the self.

Conversely, against the suffocating encroachments of system or state, the Dionysian insists upon our individualities and the distinctions of our needs and gifts. If, as Aristotle says, matter is the principle of individuation, then the Dionysian consciousness demands that no disembodied abstraction diminish me: let no system ignore my age, my womanhood, my manhood, my intellect, my artistic gifts, my vocation. Note: the Dionysian consciousness does *not* say, "Let me follow any whim or fancy I desire," but rather, "Let me realize as fully as possible the distinctive roles for which *nature* has suited me."

One of the great deceptions of democracy—and of democratic advertising—is that we can be anything we like. But we cannot all be beautiful or thin or athletic; we cannot all be concert violinists; we cannot all be strong or stoical; we cannot all be good conversationalists or calm in crises or good drivers or good story-tellers or good cooks. And, though history may sometimes suggest the opposite, not just anyone can be President. That so many publications pandering to the voyeurs of glamour, adventure, wealth, and romance make money is testament to the pernicious appeal of abstractions in our lives—of denials of the individuality that democracies are meant to enhance and that Dionysian consciousness forever asserts.

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The Accent of Choice

David R. Carlin

As a lifelong Democrat and erstwhile liberal, I'm sorry to have to admit this—but I'm afraid a lot of Democrats and liberals have not been exactly gracious about their defeat in last November's congressional elections. I grant that Newt Gingrich, who gives no quarter to either liberals or Democrats, may be hard to swallow; but the role of the loser in American politics is traditional and well-defined. You have to smile, say that the people have spoken, wish the winner the best of luck in the difficult days that lie ahead, etc. You don't have to mean any of this, of course, and every gracious word plus your smile can be totally insincere. But you really are expected to say things like this, even when the winner is someone you simply can't stand.

I thought President Clinton did not do badly acknowledging defeat at a press conference the day after the great defeat. By contrast, the *New York*

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Times, instead of congratulating the new Speaker and his party, labeled Gingrich an "authoritarian" in its lead editorial two days after the election. As the psychologically literate understand, the word "authoritarian" is a polite code word for "fascist." As we have been told since the Nazi era, authoritarian personalities are those whose moral and mental composition renders them ripe for a fascist political style. The *Times* would have us understand that Gingrich does not stand in the tradition of Jefferson, as he pretends, but in the tradition of Mussolini and Hitler. The new House of Representatives, in this view, will be a kind of ongoing Nuremburg rally, with the Republican majority acting as a "rubber stamp" (as the *Times* puts it) for the Fuehrer's agenda.

I doubt any other Gingrich-bashers have been able to equal the *Times* in its truly magnificent degree of ungraciousness, but many have made a good try. Since the election I have heard prominent liberals describe the new Speaker and his supporters as "morally arrogant" and "self-righteous" enough times that I have come to suspect these are part of his name, like a warrior from the Icelandic sagas: Newt the Self-Righteous.

My aim, however, is not to defend Speaker Gingrich and prove that he is meek, gentle, and kind. I suspect making such a case would be a formidable task. I am more interested in the mentality of the critics. To call someone morally arrogant and self-righteous seems to imply that the accuser is at least relatively free of these imperfections. But have American liberals been notable for their lack of self-righteousness and moral arrogance?

When I was a child growing up in Rhode Island I thought that people in Rhode Island did not have an accent. People in Boston, forty miles up the road, had an accent (plus a few odd words). When they wanted soda, they asked for tonic, which they pronounced "tawnic." People in New York City definitely had an accent, as did people from the South. And of course people from England had an accent (probably a phony one, resulting from speaking pretentiously all the time). Naturally, immigrants from Italy and Portugal had accents, but that was not their fault; and besides, their children who grew up in Rhode Island turned out to be accent-free. Then one day, after I had grown older and wiser, it dawned on me that there is no such thing as speaking without an accent, not even for people who have the privilege of growing up in Rhode Island. This was a great discovery, the first step on the never-ending road toward transcending ethnocentrism.

Cultural liberals who accuse the cultural right of wanting to "impose its values" on everyone else remind me of myself as a child. They are like people who imagine that in this wide world they alone are accent-free. According to its self-image, the cultural left alone does not impose values. Instead it allows everyone to live by his or her own freely elected (or freely constructed) values. Hence the cultural left will not impose its values relative to abortion, sexual orientation, family forms, suicide, etc. Neither the state nor public opinion should tell anyone whether to abort or not, whether to be gay or straight or bisexual, whether to marry or to cohabit, whether to marry homosexually or heterosexually, whether to have children in or out of wedlock, whether to commit suicide or to go on living. What could be more neutral? What could be more free from a desire to impose one's values on others?

But of course neutrality itself is a value. If Jones says, "Marriage is good and cohabitation wicked," Jones is expressing a value. And if Smith says, "Cohabitation is good and marriage wicked," Smith is expressing a value, though a different one from Jones. But if Robinson says, "Both marriage and cohabitation are permissible," then Robinson too is expressing a value, albeit a different one from either Jones or Smith. Jones favors marriage, Smith favors cohabitation, and Robinson favors choice.

If Jones and his friends arrange society so as to favor marriage and discourage cohabitation, Jones and friends are "imposing" their pro-marriage values on the rest of us. If Smith and his friends arrange society so as to favor cohabitation and discourage marriage, then Smith and friends are "imposing" their pro-cohabitation values on the rest of us. And if Robinson and his friends arrange society so as to favor free choice between marriage and cohabitation, then clearly Robinson and friends are "imposing" their pro-choice values on the rest of us.

Now it may be that choice is a better social value than either marriage or cohabitation. But that is not the issue here. The point is that choice is a value, and the people who try to maximize choice in American society (i.e., the cultural liberals) are trying to impose their values on the rest of us. Perhaps they are right to do so; for the time being I have no wish to dispute that point. But the difference between them and the cultural conservatives is not that the conservatives are trying to impose values on society while the liberals are not. The difference is that the conservatives are trying to impose one set of values, while the cultural liberals are trying to impose another set. If the liberals want to defend the values they are trying to impose on others, let them do so by saying, "Our values are better than your values; therefore society should live according to our values, not yours." Let them not do so by dishonestly saying, "We never try to impose our values on others; therefore you shouldn't either."

In other words, liberals speak with accents just like everybody else. Admittedly, this may seem obvious to some readers. What is obvious to me is that many of our fellow citizens, like that boy in Rhode Island,

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have yet to make this great discovery.

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Amending the School Prayer Amendment

James R. Stoner, Jr.

The missing clause in the Republicans' "Contract With America," which surfaced for a moment after last November's election only to be submerged until this summer, is the promise to secure a vote on a constitutional amendment that would permit voluntary and student-led prayers in the public schools. Nonetheless, Newt Gingrich's personal commitment to an amendment to the Constitution permitting voluntary school prayer is clear. Not only has the Speaker promised a House vote on an amendment by the summer, but the sentiment behind the proposal seems genuinely to be central to the articulated vision of a "renewal of American civilization" that informs all the speeches of this professor-turned-politician. "I do not have a vision of America which is dramatically better just because people pray," he said in a speech at the Heritage Foundation a month before the November vote, "but I do have a vision of an America in which belief in the Creator is once again at the center of defining being an American."

Though usually identified with the entrepreneurial wing of conservatism, Gingrich follows in the tradition of authors such as Michael Novak in seeing a link between individual enterprise and religious faith. His critique of the secular welfare state and his ambition to dismantle it rest not on secular libertarian premises but on his sense that the welfare state undermines the sense of responsibility for oneself and others that goes along with seeing oneself as God's creature. The point of allowing school prayer, Gingrich argued in that speech, is to "reestablish . . . that there is a spiritual dimension to our existence" and "to remind everyone of the word 'Creator.'" Without such an understanding, such evils as poverty and crime are intractable.

Shortly before last November's election, Representative Ernest Istook of Oklahoma introduced, with the Speaker among his cosponsors, a draft constitutional amendment:

> Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any State to participate in prayer. Neither the United States nor any State shall compose the words of any prayer to be said in the public schools.

To my mind this draft is a good start for this year's deliberations, but in accepting in its final sentence the verdict of the Supreme Court's first prayer decision, in 1962, which threw out New York's simple and ecumenical Regents' prayer, the draft is either too timid (liberty depends on the voluntariness of a prayer's recital, not the accident of its composition) or too sectarian (given the Court's expansive notion of state action in the 1992 graduation prayer case, even suggested guidelines for nonsectarian public prayer might be forbidden). If the moment is ripe, and if something more is intended than a constitutionalized version of the Equal Access Act, then a proposal is due, at least for debate, that would stem the tide of militant secularism that has flooded American life and law since the 1960s. Opposition to any school prayer amendment is assured, after all, so nothing is lost by a serious effort to recover the place of religion in American public life.

Remembering that the Bill of Rights was originally drafted by James Madison after assembling the many proposals for amendments submitted by state ratifying conventions, and that the amendments as actually passed were significantly altered from Madison's initial draft, I would add the following version to the deliberations:

> The prohibition of laws respecting an establishment of religion shall not be construed to forbid voluntary prayer or other religious exercise in public places, or to bar expenditure of public money for the general welfare through religious institutions; nor shall general laws be held invalid on grounds of the religious beliefs or motives of those supporting enactment of such laws.

Let me recount what I think are the advantages of an amendment of this sort. The peculiar locution, or circumlocution, with which this draft amendment begins is meant to take a clear position on a fundamental issue necessarily raised by any effort to further amend the Constitution with respect to religion: The purpose of the amendment would be to restore the original understanding of the Founding generation, which has been misconstrued by several generations of justices on the Supreme Court, and not to alter the historic American principle of religious liberty. As scholars as diverse as Robert Cord, Gerard

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Bradley, Ellis Sandoz, Thomas Curry, Michael McConnell, and others have shown, and as Supreme Court justices including Warren Burger, William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, and others have accepted, the Religion Clause of the First Amendment must be understood in the context of the vibrant spiritual life of late eighteenth-century America and thus should not be seen as forbidding a wide array of then-contemporary practices, including government-sponsored prayer, proclamations of days of prayer and thanksgiving, even grants to the clergy to run schools for the Indians. The prohibition against laws "respecting an establishment of religion" was meant, in the eyes of these scholars and justices, to insure that the federal government would not prefer one denomination to another (as some states at the time still did); at most, even taking Jefferson's and Madison's campaign for disestablishment in Virginia as the paradigm rather than the exception, the intention was to prevent the government from subsidizing religion itself. (As Speaker Gingrich puts it, "The Founding Fathers were trying to limit government in a world in which, literally, you had to pay a tax to a church you didn't belong to and didn't believe in.") Nearly everyone at the time assumed that society depended upon a shared morality, and that morality, at least for most men, was a product of religious faith. As Paul Johnson writes in his January 1995 *Commentary* article, "God and the Americans,"

> though the Constitution and the Bill of Rights made no provision for a state church—quite the contrary—there was an implied and unchallenged understanding that America was a religious country, that the republic was religious not necessarily in its forms but in its bones, that it was inconceivable that it could have come into existence, or could continue and flourish, without an overriding religious sentiment pervading every nook and cranny of its society. This religious sentiment was based on the Scriptures and the Decalogue, was embodied in the moral consensus of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and manifested itself in countless forms of mainly Christian worship. Since American religion was a collection of faiths, coexisting in mutual tolerance, there was no alternative but to create a secular state entirely separated from any church. But there was an unspoken understanding that, in an emotional sense, the republic was not secular. It was still the City upon a Hill, watched over and safeguarded by divine providence, and constituting a beacon of enlightenment and an exemplar of conduct for the rest of the world.

That this consensus survived until almost yesterday can be confirmed by anyone who reads the walls at the great monuments in Washington, D.C., or considers the paintings that hang in the rotunda of the Capitol, or goes over in his mind all the verses of nearly any of our patriotic songs.

Now my point is not to deny any plausibility to the alternative interpretation; after all, some of the leading statesmen of the Founding seem to have been quite a bit more secular than most of their contemporaries, and an America that became ever more religious in the wake of the Second Great Awakening was the America that went to Civil War. Rather, it is that, since the interpretation sketched in the preceding paragraph has its own cogency, it is legitimate for the people to establish it as authoritative, and it would be wise for them to so establish their authority in a way that recovers the American tradition, or in other words, in a way that keeps the prohibition on establishment and the guarantee of free exercise of religion intact.

No one is suggesting that the American experiment in religious liberty has proven a failure and that as a consequence we must repair to the comfort of an established church, but only that the recent experiment in strict separationism and militant secularism has impinged on religious liberty itself and must be curbed. The language offered, "shall not be construed," borrowed from the Ninth and Eleventh Amendments and used as well in the Istook draft, makes it clear that the error to be corrected was committed in legal circles. The implication is, I think quite evidently, that states and cities and counties and towns would have ample room to determine for themselves how to acknowledge and involve the spirit of religion in the life of their communities, provided that no particular church gained official status and that the rights of conscience were preserved.

The aim of the draft amendment's school prayer clause is obviously to allow a long-standing American tradition to be restored. The universal acquiescence in speaking explicitly of voluntary prayer shows that the advocates of a school prayer amendment do not differ from the courts in rejecting coercion in religious matters. They only have a hardier notion of what it means to be coerced: religious liberty is not a right never to be confronted with ultimate questions or made uncomfortable by difference. To be sure, the sort of public prayer that is usually offered will seem thin gruel to an Orthodox Jew, a traditional Catholic, or a Protestant evangelical, but that hardly seems to be a reason for supposing it does no good, only a reminder that civil religion is an introduction to, not a replacement for, the real thing.

As for the protection offered in my text for "other religious exercise in public places," I mean to endorse an interpretation of what the Constitution permits in holiday displays and in the use of public facilities by religious groups that does not privilege secular culture over religious culture in the public life of a community. To the fear that majority culture will so dominate the scene as to exclude minority religions, I would reply that America's religious

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diversity seems generally to insure that politicians, unlike judges, soon learn at the polls a hard lesson in tolerance if they offend. Besides, the Free Exercise provision would not be touched by this amendment, but, arguably, would be reinforced.

The second substantive clause in the draft, allowing expenditure of public money for the general welfare through religious institutions, has the immediate purpose of insuring room for the sort of experimentation in the provision of charitable social services that Speaker Gingrich suggests, not to mention forestalling judicial interference with serious programs of school choice. The further intention is to acknowledge that the modern crisis concerning religious establishment arose coevally with the welfare state, which itself was a response, perhaps misguided, to economic modernization. As government came to absorb increasing wealth through income taxation and to hold itself responsible for keeping people fed, schooled, and housed, it crowded out the earlier providers of charitable services, most especially churches. Even if Republicans succeed in their most radical ambitions of dismantling the welfare state, some of its parts, for example federal old-age insurance, are apt to remain, and it is always good to hedge against the sure bet that sooner or later public policies will change. Again, the point is not to remove the ban on government paying priests to say mass or ministers to preach revivals, but to allow the full participation of churches and church-sponsored institutions in the charitable and intellectual life of the community in an age when government resources tend to dominate the field.

The third clause, reaffirming the right to speak and act from religious motives in the public square, must seem the strangest. The free speech and press clause of the First Amendment and indeed the whole character of democratic politics would seem already to guarantee this, and unlike school prayer and parochial aid this right has not obviously or not often fallen before a majority of the Supreme Court. I include it because a ban on religious principle in public action—achieved indirectly by voiding legislation advocated by its proponents on religious grounds—seems to me the logical next step of the secularists, already foreshadowed: certain opinions in abortion cases have suggested that restrictions on abortion, because they originate in tenets of religious faith, cannot be enacted into law without running afoul of the Establishment Clause; in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985) the Court threw out a state statute mandating a moment of silence at the beginning of the school day because a few state legislators had been imprudent enough to suggest that students might use the time to pray; and in cases concerning state restrictions on the teaching of biological evolution, the religious origin of the contrary opinion proved to be the statutes' fatal flaw. The issue here is precisely the "naked public square," and the responsibility of seeing it decently clothed. As America will impose on no one a constitutional faith, so its Constitution should be such as can be embraced in good conscience by servants of the Lord.

Let me close by considering briefly a few objections that might be raised to a prayer amendment or to the version I propose. To the claim that the First Amendment ought not to be disturbed, I reply, in the spirit of John Locke's account of the right of revolution, that the disturbance has already occurred in the form of a generation or two of judicial decisions that upset the original and long-standing arrangement concerning the place of religion in public life. The frankly restorative form of the version here recommended would remedy the ill without revising the Founding principle.

To the claim that a prayer amendment has no chance of succeeding but is merely an exercise in symbolic politics, I would reply that the surprising changes signaled by elections in both 1992 and 1994 ought to make anyone hesitate to speak with certainty about what the electorate will and will not do. Passage of such an amendment would certainly be difficult, but the hard work of building a successful coalition would have its own reward, because it will require a coming together not only of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, but also of whites and blacks—many recent incidents in the press concerning school prayer have involved the latter—especially in the South, and no one needs to be told how historic that would be.

An objection I can imagine from readers of this journal would be to wonder why the forces of conservatism should expend their limited resources on a school prayer amendment, even in expanded form, rather than mobilize to withstand the threats in the burgeoning abortion and euthanasia culture that seem so much more immediate and real. Here I am tempted to plead realism: public opinion seems stalled at a more or less even divide on abortion, and, barring actuarial surprise, the Supreme Court seems fixed in its favor for at least another decade. But perhaps, since success for the pro-life cause looks increasingly as though it will depend upon the conversion of hearts rather than on political acumen and current electoral strength, it is providential that the question of prayer should come first. For if a prayer amendment could, in the process of its enactment and in its effect, restore the original American understanding of the place of religion in republican life, I am confident that a people who have rediscovered how to see the hand of the Almighty in their daily lives will soon come around to seeing life itself as God's gift.

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ON THE OTHER HAND

Chinese Greeting Cards and the East Asian Future

Peter L. Berger

The readers of First Things, I know, are eagerly awaiting further reports by this writer from the wilder shores of American feminism and other battlefields of this country's culture war. But I have just returned from visiting China, and at least for the moment, the shock has diverted my attention from our local disturbances. And the whole point of writing a column is for the columnist to share his nightmares, or so I have been told.

It is about seven years since my previous visit to the Middle Kingdom. The place is hardly recognizable. Then as now, I went from Hongkong to Canton by boat, though the boat has greatly changed. Then it was a sparsely furnished ferry, the sort where one anxiously locates the lifeboats as soon as one is on board. Now the boat was almost elegant, serving food and regaling the passengers with Hongkong-made sitcoms and science-fiction movies (the two, as far as I could tell, overlap). What has remained the same is the sensation, as one travels up the Pearl River, of sailing into the past. But, again, it is now a different past. Then it was going from Hongkong modernity into a timeless Chinese reality of underdevelopment. Now it is the bustling world of the early Industrial Revolution—the world of Charles Dickens, say, orientalized in a Brechtian *Verfremdung*. Wherever one looks, there is construction—roads, factories, vast blocks of apartment buildings.

China is undergoing a gigantic capitalist revolution—breathtakingly dynamic, raw, brutal. A Hongkong businessman observed (not necessarily disapprovingly), "They treat workers like cogs." And another one says, "You know, what China could use now is a bit of socialism." Ironically, a red flag still flutters over this replication of nineteenth-century Western capitalism. But the People's Liberation Army owns luxury hotels and gambling casinos, and, it is rumored, so do the security services. Apparently there are members of the Communist party who find all this ideologically repulsive; most are successfully converting their political elite status into a commercial advantage. An economic giant is in the making. What will be the values that will animate this new society?

When I was in Canton the last time, it was just waking up from its Maoist stupor. Private enterprises were beginning to spring up here and there; there were a few cars. Now there are stores and businesses everywhere; the center of the city is one enormous traffic jam. The masses of cars, buses, motorcycles, bicycles, and reckless pedestrians remind me of Mexico City and other urban explosions in the Third World, but then I notice a striking difference. There is almost no color, and there are very few children. The latter fact has two causes—the ruthless policy of population control ("one couple, one child"), which has been quite successful at least in the cities, and the migration pattern whereby men come into the cities looking for work and leave their families back in the villages. It is strange to be in a city that still looks like a place in the Third World, but where everything is colored gray and where there are few children. The effect is grim.

I returned to Hongkong by train and the sense of travelling through time is reversed. Now, one is travelling into China's future. Shenzen is the city on the border. It is the center of a special economic zone, where everything has been done to facilitate foreign investment and industrial development. A decade ago this was a sleepy fishing village; it is now a city of about two and a half million people. It already resembles Hongkong, full of highrises and blazing with neon signs at night. The resemblance is not accidental. Much of this development is based on Hongkong capital, Hongkong firms, and Hongkong management.

The mood in Hongkong reflects this. It is already the economic capital of China. At least among business people, there is now much less anxiety about the takeover in 1997 (some intellectuals are worried, but they form a small group). One repeatedly hears the statement, almost a mantra by now: "China is not going to take over Hongkong; Hongkong is taking over China." A comforting illusion? Maybe. But business is booming, and real estate prices in Hongkong are now higher than those in Tokyo. There are no signs of capital flight. In terms of per capita income, Hongkong is now the sixth-richest society on earth. The annual salary of a senior university secretary is about U.S.-$50,000. The chief executive officer of the Hongkong Stock Exchange tells how he is helping to set up new exchanges in several Chinese cities; he explains why, in his opinion, Shanghai is unlikely to win the competition for being the financial center.

I was in the region in connection with a research project on the role of business in processes of modernization and democracy. There can be little doubt about the modernizing impact of business. Democracy is another matter. In China, of course, it is not a good idea to ask people about democracy. But there

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still is reasonable freedom of speech in Her Majesty's colony. In a week of conversations in Hongkong I did not meet a single person (Chinese or British, I might add) who had anything positive to say about democracy. Admittedly, most of my interlocutors were business people, but my impression is that their view may well be shared by the majority of Hongkongers. There is worry about various things that the Chinese government might do that would have negative consequences, including repressive measures, but democracy as such is not a focus of anxiety. There had been an eruption of protest at the time of the Tienanmen massacre in 1989, but this was more a matter of outrage about the brutality of the repression rather than of frustrated democratic aspirations.

One Hongkong businessman summed up his view of the matter in a rather elegant syllogism: "We know that every society that has a welfare state declines economically. We have to stop the welfare state. In order to stop the welfare state, we have to stop democracy." One member of our project team was a South African, still flush with pride about the democratic transformation in her country; as these conversations in Hongkong proceeded, she went into a sort of political culture shock.

It is possible by now to envisage a new brand of Asian capitalism, with China rather than Japan at its core. This is the vision evoked by the phrase "the Singapore model." The model is of an unreservedly capitalist economy, its society highly efficient and meritocratic, its polity authoritarian and not overly concerned with the rights of individuals over against the collectivity. There is the question of how such a regime would legitimate itself. In all likelihood, the legitimation would be nationalism, buttressed by some form of Confucianism (scholars might call it pseudo-Confucianism, but that will not bother the political types in charge). Westerners and Asians with democratic convictions will, of course, characterize this model in morally pejorative terms. The advocates of the model are already reciprocating in the exchange of moral recriminations. The West, according to them, is decadent, enfeebled by mutually contradictory claims to entitlements, plagued by an individualism gone berserk and a political system that can no longer govern. Under this burden of cultural, social, and political pathologies, Western economies are bound to decline. The face of the twenty-first century will be an Asian face—or, more accurately, an *East* Asian face, since the plausibility of the model runs into difficulties in the parts of Asia untouched by Sinitic civilization.

The leaders of present-day Hongkong business probably provide a good picture of the future. To be sure, they have some attractive features. These are people who are smart, sophisticated, unsentimental, yet very much devoted to their families. Their self-confidence at first seems attractive too, especially when compared to the whining culture prevalent in America today, but it is also brash, aggressive, with a touch of brutality. Those features are captured in the joke told by an astute British observer of the city: "What is the Hongkong definition of a pervert? It is a man who loves women more than money."

As a description, this is not altogether fair. These businessmen certainly love the women in their own families. In the larger society, though, they exhibit an ethos that has little use for extra-familial loyalties and that has little capacity to inspire the creation of a civil society. The acquisitive urge and the sheer passion for doing business predominate. There are important differences here between Chinese and Japanese culture, and it is conceivable that in the long run the former may discover that these differences put them at a disadvantage. Gordon Redding, the Dean of the Business School at the University of Hongkong and author of *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism*, has argued in a recent article that China will not become the next Japan precisely because it cannot generate wider circles of trust and loyalty without which, supposedly, an advanced capitalist economy cannot function. Perhaps he is right. It is also possible, however, that China is creating a new model of successful capitalism that will differ from both its Western and Japanese predecessors.

Long ago Ibn-Khaldun, the great medieval Arab historian, distinguished between hard and soft cultures; he also theorized about the process by which hard cultures become comfortable and consequently softer. The assumption is that hard cultures win out in history and that they start losing when they soften. There is much to be said for this theory of history, though one might object that the theory weakens when applied to technologically advanced societies. Put alongside Western societies, the new Asian capitalism is indeed hard. The sixty-four-billion-yuan question is whether it too will eventually soften. Not only Japan but also the democratizing societies of South Korea and Taiwan would suggest a positive answer. Again, though, China may turn out to march to a very different drummer. Its sheer size might insulate it against the softening cultural influences, most of them Western in provenance, that have affected smaller Asian societies.

Claudio Véliz, in his new book comparing the economic cultures of North and Latin America (*The New World of the Gothic Fox*), has argued that Anglo-American civilization is now in its "Hellenistic" phase. When Greece had lost political power, its culture conquered the entire Mediterranean world and its language become the lingua franca throughout that world. The modern world was born in England, the home of both capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. The British empire is gone and American imperial power may also be in decline, but Anglo-American culture and the English language

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enjoy virtually worldwide hegemony. Véliz believes that this cultural hegemony must necessarily carry with it a set of institutions linked to it historically—including the institutions of democracy. China will provide a hugely significant test of Véliz's theory.

We visited an Italian motorcycle factory in Guandong province, in a rather dismal town called Foshan. (The Italian manager, when asked about the size of the town, said, "Oh, it's not big. Less than a million people.") The Italian staff told us about their training program for Chinese skilled workers. We asked in what language the training was conducted. The Italians laughed. Another Italian company had tried to teach their Chinese employees Italian (not out of national chauvinism, but because Italian training manuals could then be used in China, perhaps also because Chinese workers whose only foreign language was Italian could not so easily be lured away to work for other foreign companies). The Italianization experiment failed; the Chinese refused to learn Italian. So now this Italian factory operating in China is teaching English to its Chinese employees. Needless to say, this also means that only English-speaking Italians are eligible for company jobs in China.

In Hongkong we met a businessman who distributes Hallmark greeting cards throughout China. The business is going very well indeed. Valentine cards are especially favored. The distributor explained: "You know, Chinese men have difficulties expressing their emotions. It is much easier for them if they can send a card to a girl that says, 'You are my Number One,' or 'I love you.'" We asked whether there were problems translating messages on the cards into Chinese. "Oh no," said our interlocutor, "we don't translate anything into Chinese. They want the messages to be in English."

Is there a necessary link between English manuals of motorcycle maintenance, English expressions of romantic affection, and such historically English ideas as democracy and human rights? The answer will not be forthcoming for some time. Much will hinge on it. One way or the other, the new Chinese face of capitalism will impress itself more and more on the world's consciousness. A few weeks after these conversations I was in Frankfurt. My German colleagues who were picking me up said: "You know, your hotel is full of Japanese." They were wrong. The hotel was indeed full of East Asians, evidently businessmen with their families, loud, self-assured, extremely well-dressed, and giving peremptory orders to the hotel staff. But they were not Japanese. They were Hongkong Chinese. Germans, Americans, and everyone else will have to take note of the difference.

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Legion

"My name is Legion, for we are many."—Mark 5:9

The water lapping, stench of rotting pork
bringing thick phlegm to the throat—no one said
a miracle was always pleasant. Dead
Lazarus stank wretchedly when uncorked.
Here, by the sea, the pale pigs drift in,
rising and rolling in the green greasy
water. Swollen, gross, their propensity
lay, no doubt, toward swinish openness to sin;
the damned demons, however, got off free
as birds, free as these spinning, hellish gulls.
No one said also that God's impartial—
after all, *thou* mayst receive, but not *thee.*
Well, some plans are above us, some thoughts too big.
Kneel with me. Help hoist this slab of dead pig.

Craig Payne

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Waco: A Massacre and Its Aftermath

Dean M. Kelley

I

Back in the late 1920s the finger of God touched Victor Houteff, and he left the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria to join the Seventh-day Adventists. In 1929 he moved to California, where, though not approved by the main body of Seventh-day Adventism, he gained a following with his preaching. He and his followers moved to Texas in 1935 to found a community called Mt. Carmel in order to follow Houteff's teachings without distraction from their neighbors and the mainstream of society.

Houteff died in 1955 without seeing the coming of the millennium that he had preached. His wife, Florence—succeeding him as leader of the group, which called itself the "Davidian Seventh-day Adventists"—announced that the new era would begin on April 22, 1959. About nine hundred people across the country sold their homes and moved to Mt. Carmel near Waco to await the end (throwing a considerable burden on the public welfare program of McClennan County). When the date came and went and nothing happened, most of the disappointed adherents drifted away. About fifty remained, however, and moved to a New Mt. Carmel about ten miles from Waco.

The next year leadership devolved on Ben Roden, who called his following "Branch Davidians" to distinguish it from another group that continued the plain "Davidian" strand. After his death, his wife Lois led the group, traveling and meeting with foreign heads of state in the effort to spread the message. After her death a struggle took place between her son, George, and a relative newcomer to the group, Vernon Howell. She actually had favored Vernon as her successor, but George remained in control of the colony, so Vernon moved to Palestine (Texas), taking with him those among the faithful who accepted him rather than George as their prophet.

George challenged Vernon to a duel in 1987 to prove which was the True Prophet. The form of the duel was to see who could bring back to life a long-dead Davidian whose casket was exhumed by Roden. Howell declined the challenge and complained to authorities about the exhumation. When they demanded proof, Howell and seven armed followers stole into the Mt. Carmel premises to photograph the coffin. Roden caught them, and a gunfight broke out. All eight of the Branch Davidians were tried for attempted murder. Seven were acquitted, and Howell's trial ended in a hung jury. He was never retried.

George Roden did not prosper at Mt. Carmel. He lost most of his followers, went into debt, and rented out some of the ramshackle buildings to non-Davidian tenants, including two drug traffickers. Roden was jailed for six months for writing threatening letters to a judge, and during that time Howell gained title to Mt. Carmel by paying off sixteen years of delinquent taxes. In 1989 Roden murdered a man with an axe and was committed to a mental institution, where he remains—though he did escape briefly in 1993—and Howell's followers, in apprehension that Roden would return to attack them, maintained an armed vigilance against that threat (and others).

II

Early in 1990, Vernon Howell legally changed his name to "David Koresh," after the Hebrew King David (prototype of the messiah) and the Persian King Cyrus (who freed the Jews from Babylonian captivity). He was not the first to choose the latter name. In 1869, Cyrus R. Teed changed his name to

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"Koresh," taught that he was the messiah, and wrote commentaries on the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation. He drew a following of "Koreshians," but was killed in Florida in 1906 during a violent encounter with a marshal.

When Howell joined the Branch Davidians in 1981, he was not a prepossessing figure. Illegitimate, dyslexic, a stutterer, a high school drop-out, obsessed with cars, guns, and rock music, he was described by one commentator as "a tearful, insecure, pesky young man." He was also intelligent, articulate, mechanically adept, a capable guitarist, and the possessor of an immense store of memorized passages of Scripture. Sometime in the mid-1980s, the finger of God touched him, and within a few years he had matured, lost his speech defect, and shown an amazing ability to enlist followers attracted to his Bible-based vision and his ability to articulate it. He was adept at stringing together phrases from Psalms, Revelation, and some of the more obscure passages of the Prophets to form an intricate new prophecy of imminent Armageddon—with himself in the leading role of the "Lamb of God." His followers came to accept him as a voice of authority.

So persuasive was his message that he drew converts (mostly Seventh-day Adventists) from many states and foreign countries. He also showed himself an able organizer, rebuilding New Mt. Carmel from a scattering of shacks into a rambling frame structure of several floors combining chapel, residence, gymnasium, water and watch towers, tornado shelter, swimming pool, and utility space. He led in developing several commercial ventures for the financing of the community, including repairing and retooling automobiles and selling guns, ammunition vests, hunting camouflage, and ornamental (empty) hand grenades at gun shows around the state.

David Koresh inherited a millennial view from Houteff and the Rodens, along with their authoritarian style of leadership. His message focused on the decoding of cryptic apocalyptic passages (such as the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation) that he understood to refer to the present: the inbreaking of God's will into human history was about to occur, with a cosmic struggle between good and evil; the forces of evil would be concentrated in the present center of earthly power, the government of the United States, whose Babylonian might would be brought to bear against the Lamb and his Elect.

But the Lamb was not going to submit meekly to the Babylonians. The Battle of Armageddon must be waged with maximum effort by the faithful to draw down the heavenly host and bring in the City of God. To that end Howell accumulated arms for his followers, possibly even beyond the generous norms of gun ownership in Texas or the needs of the gun trade. He was stimulated in that endeavor by a curious and seemingly unrelated event, described in the chronology of a postmortem report by the U.S. Treasury Department as follows:

> March 5-9, 1992 — Local law enforcement conduct SWAT training near [Mt. Carmel]. David Koresh . . . reacts by: 1) bringing back members from California and England; 2) making large purchases of weapon parts; 3) acquiring chemicals which can be used to make explosives; 4) purchasing night vision scopes and sensors; and 5) accumulating large supplies of ammunition.

In other words, Koresh saw this three-day episode of noisy police maneuvers within ear-range of Mt. Carmel as brazen intimidation by the Babylonians, and he responded with strong defensive measures. These very measures, in turn, brought him to the attention of federal authorities, who might otherwise not have been much interested in an obscure little sect out on the plains of Texas.

One other feature of the teaching of Koresh was pertinent to the unfolding of events. He discerned in several scriptural passages, especially the Forty-fifth Psalm, the implication that the Lamb should be united with the "king's daughters," "honourable women," "virgins," to beget "children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." His understanding (which came to be shared by his followers) was that only the seed of the Lamb was pure and that the Lamb alone should beget the children who would rule the world in the coming age. To that end, Koresh was accorded exclusive marital rights to all of the women in the community, and their husbands (if they were married) relinquished such rights to Koresh because of their belief that he correctly understood the divine will. As a result, by 1993 Koresh was the father of more than a dozen young children by several women in addition to his legal wife, Rachel Jones (daughter of a long-time Davidian, Perry Jones).

Perhaps understandably, this led to some criticism from outsiders, inspired by disaffected ex-members who complained to the authorities about "child abuse." A nine-week investigation in 1992 by the Texas Bureau of Child Protective Services, however, found no evidence of such abuse. Discipline of children does appear to have been strict at Mt. Carmel, and Koresh sometimes paddled young children severely for infractions. But the children who were examined by Texas authorities were found to be healthy, well-adjusted, and non-traumatized. Those pictured on a videotape with Koresh made during the siege seemed fond of him and unapprehensive.

New religious movements often have unconventional marital arrangements—as, for instance, the "complex marriage" of the nineteenth-century Oneida Community, in which all the women were married to all the men, but had to have the approval

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of John Humphrey Noyes to consummate conjugal relations. (If any couple became too attached, he would send one or the other off to an outpost in Wallingford, Connecticut, to get over it.) Whatever the arrangements were at Mt. Carmel, they were part of a project of "soteriological procreation" (the term used by Lawrence Sullivan of Harvard, one of the government's chosen commentators on the federal reports about Waco), and it was a collective project—one joined in by the religious community as an undertaking to treasure, husband, and disseminate the pure seed of the prophet as a precious resource for raising up the heirs of the new Kingdom. It did not necessarily seem to be "abuse" to those who experienced it. One account appearing in *Newsweek* put it this way:

> To many girls being chosen by Koresh was an honor they eagerly sought. Koresh "wouldn't do it unless you wanted it," says Jeanine Bunds, 51. . . . "It wasn't about sex, but he was a very appealing, sexual person. . . ." He just loved the idea of womanhood . . . and he made you feel special. . . . A union with Koresh was spiritual, says Robyn Bunds, who met with Koresh when she was fourteen and slept with him when she was seventeen. . . . "He's perfect, and he's going to father your children. What more can you ask for?"

III

As the government told the story in retrospect, its attention was drawn to the Branch Davidians near Waco in May 1992, when a driver for United Parcel Service reported that a carton for delivery to Mt. Carmel had broken open to reveal a shipment of (inert) hand grenades. The incident was reported to the Waco sheriff's office, which notified the office of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms in Austin. An agent named Davey Aguilera was assigned to investigate, and by tracing UPS invoices he compiled a list of $43,000 worth of guns, gun parts, gun kits, grenade hulls, black powder, chemicals, fuses, and ammunition. He contacted former members of the religious group for information about its activities and wrote a report in which allegations of child sexual abuse figured prominently (though that was not a matter within the jurisdiction of the federal agency).

The agency's interest lagged in mid-1992 until a television program on sexual harassment within ATF threatened to impair the agency's prospects at Congressional budget hearings in March 1993. Perhaps in search of good press, the agency began in December to plan a major raid on the Branch Davidians. A warrant for the arrest of Vernon Howell and a warrant for the search of his property at Mt. Carmel for illegal firearms were obtained (both based on an affidavit hastily put together by Aguilera). After assembling a large number of agents and rehearsing for several days, the ATF launched its raid on a Sunday morning, February 28, 1993, in what it described as a "dynamic entry."

The "dynamic" part of the entry was impaired, however, by the loss of the element of surprise. On the morning of the raid, several converging lines moved toward closure. A mile-long convoy of eighty government vehicles with their headlights on, including two covered cattle trailers containing over seventy ATF agents in full SWAT gear, reached the staging area at Bellmead on the edge of Waco at 7:30 A.M. Two helicopters supplied by the Texas National Guard warmed up at the command center at the Texas State Technical College airport twelve miles away. Robert Rodriguez, an undercover ATF agent who had "infiltrated" the Davidians (but was suspected by them of being a plant), entered the residence to join the morning Bible study.

The media also began to circle around. The day before, a cameraman for a Waco television station had been told by an ambulance dispatcher that the ATF had asked them to have three ambulances on standby for Sunday morning. A paramedic had also told him that "something big" was going to happen over the weekend. Editors from the *Waco Tribune Herald* drove by the TSTC airport and saw military aircraft clustered there. By Sunday morning nine reporters had been assigned to scout the scene around Mt. Carmel. One of them got lost and asked directions from a local mailman, to whom he confided that some kind of law enforcement action was about to take place at Mt. Carmel. After they parted, the mailman—David Jones, who happened to be David Koresh's brother-in-law—headed for the residence to give the alarm. His father, Perry Jones, called Koresh out of the Bible study to tell him what David Jones had learned.

When he returned to the Bible study group, David Koresh was visibly upset. He exclaimed to Rodriguez, "Neither the ATF nor the National Guard will ever get me. They got me once, and they'll never get me again." He walked to the window and looked out, saying, "They're coming, Robert. The time has come." Rodriguez, afraid that the raid was about to begin while he was still on the premises, made the excuse that he had to leave for a breakfast appointment. Koresh shook hands with him and said, "Good luck, Robert." Rodriguez hurried to notify the raid commanders that Koresh knew they were coming. They asked if he had seen any signs of alarm or guns being distributed, and he said no. They decided that if they rushed to Mt. Carmel, they could still make the attack before the residents were mobilized.

That was about 9:00 A.M. The convoy got under way and arrived about a half hour later. Meanwhile, the helicopters that were scheduled to create a diver-

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sion in the rear of the residence so the approach of the cattle trailers filled with agents would not be noticed were late in arriving. They did not come by, the Treasury report asserted, until the cattle trucks were pulling into the yard, too late to create a diversion or for the raid to be aborted. In any event, the raid commanders were out of radio contact at the time and not available to change the plans.

So events unfolded. The two unmarked cattle trailers drew up in front of the buildings at Mt. Carmel and disgorged more than seventy agents dressed in dark commando costumes (complete with ski masks) and carrying guns, who raced toward the buildings in several groups, shouting and—at some point—shooting. David Koresh, unarmed, opened the front door before they reached it and called, "What do you want? There's women and children in here!" The lead agent claimed to have yelled, "Police! Get down!" or some such cry, and Koresh closed the door. Shortly thereafter heavy firing broke out from both sides. (Who fired first, and at what, remains a matter of sharp dispute.) Two teams of ATF agents with ladders mounted to the roof of the first floor and broke into windows of the second floor where they believed the weapons were stored. They met with heavy fire, which resulted in several casualties. One team did not make an entry, but the other did. Its members were not able to advance, however, and the effort failed. Firing continued from both sides for some time, with the agents pinned down behind their vehicles and other cover until a cease-fire was negotiated.

A few minutes after the raid began, one of the Davidians, Wayne Martin, a Harvard-trained lawyer well-regarded in Waco, called the emergency number 911 and reached the sheriff's office in Waco, where he was heard (and recorded) to cry out, "There are seventy-five men around our building and they're shooting at us! Tell 'em there are children and women in here and to call it off!" This message and variants thereof were repeated off and on for an hour as the sheriff's office tried to reach the ATF and put them in touch with Martin. Eventually a cease-fire was arranged, and the ATF recovered the bodies of four killed and a number of wounded agents and withdrew to a safe distance to regroup. They milled around in confusion because they had no fall-back plan for such contingencies as failure.

The Branch Davidians had suffered casualties as well. Perry Jones, David Koresh's father-in-law, who was standing behind him in the foyer when he opened the door, was shot. Koresh was hit in the hand and side. Winston Blake was killed at one end of the building while Jaydean Wendel was killed at the other, just as she finished nursing her baby. Peter Gent was shot and killed on the water tower. Peter Hipsman was hit inside the house. (It may be that one of the Branch Davidians—presumably with Koresh's permission—killed Perry Jones and Peter Hipsman to put them out of their pain.) Several Davidians hurrying to Mt. Carmel from a warehouse called the Mag Bag several miles away were intercepted by ATF agents. One was killed—Michael Schroeder—and one was captured, while one got away.

IV

The next day the FBI replaced the ATF as the agency in charge, ostensibly because of mutual recognition that its Hostage Rescue Team was more experienced in handling extended siege operations. The FBI established a containment perimeter around the Mt. Carmel buildings, cut off all telephone or other communications except with its own negotiators, and settled down to a patient process of trying to talk the Davidians out of their home (termed a "compound" or even a "fortress" in federalese). This consisted of hours of listening to David Koresh expound his doctrines to sleepy negotiators struggling to follow his shifting scriptural references in their Gideon bibles. His exposition relied heavily on an Adventist and millennialist vocabulary of obscure biblical allusions, each followed by a verbal nudge—"Right?" or "Correct?"—that only deepened the agents' bewilderment. Occasionally a negotiator would try to get a word in about the possibility of "coming out," but they were more heavily outgunned in the verbal than in the artillery exchange.

After a week or so of this exercise in what the federal participants began to refer to as "Bible babble," the FBI leadership on the scene grew impatient and began to use pressure tactics that tended to undercut the negotiators' efforts. During the first week of the siege twenty-one children and two elderly women did come out. (The two women were immediately handcuffed, shackled, and charged with murder. Negotiators persuaded the prosecutors to back off a bit, and the charges were withdrawn, but the women were held as "material witnesses" anyway.) In the ensuing two weeks twelve additional adults came out ("exited the compound," as the federal jargon put it), but each such departure seemed to be punished by an increase in pressure tactics. First the electricity was turned off overnight by the FBI for several days and then turned off permanently. After several adults had come out on March 21, the FBI announced that it would clear the ground around the buildings, bulldozing automobiles, go-carts, propane tanks, and other "obstacles" that stood in the way. That evening the FBI began playing very loud music over the public address system. Several times the Davidians asked over the phone that it be turned off. About midnight Koresh announced angrily that because of the loud music no one else would come out.

A few nights later huge floodlights were turned on the buildings and recordings of Tibetan chants, Christmas music, the cries of rabbits being slaughtered, and other engaging sounds were dinned into the residence, designed to make sleep impossible for

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those within. Beginning March 29, two attorneys retained by relatives of Koresh and his lieutenant, Steve Schneider, were permitted to meet with them at the door of Mt. Carmel. Later they were allowed to consult with them indoors for several hours and to talk with them by phone without federal monitoring. During the first week of April the Branch Davidians were observing Passover, and negotiations were at a standstill. Starting on April 10, the FBI began laying large coils of razor-sharp concertina wire around the buildings to close the perimeter more securely (two men—"adult males" in federalese—had "snuck"—also federalese—into the buildings during the preceding period). They also fired "flash-bangs" (distraction grenades) at anyone who came out of the buildings for any purpose other than surrender.

Throughout the siege, the FBI approached the buildings only in armored vehicles—nine Bradley fighting vehicles, five combat engineering vehicles, one tank retrieval vehicle, and two Abrams tanks. During the fifty-one days of the siege, the Branch Davidians made forty-one requests of the FBI (for milk, typewriter ribbon, batteries, etc.), of which twenty-five were granted. With the milk cartons and other deliveries, the FBI slipped in electronic listening devices that gave them a partial understanding of what was going on inside. Toward the end of March the FBI began to consider the possibility of "inserting tear gas" into the buildings to force the residents to come out if other methods did not succeed. This expedient was eventually presented to the Attorney General, Janet Reno, and after consideration and consultation with the President, she approved it.

Ironically, just as the federal government was abandoning hope of a peaceful solution, there opened up the possibility of such an outcome. Early in the siege, Koresh had promised to come out if his message could be aired on national media; he prepared an hour-long audiotape that was broadcast locally, but not (he claimed) nationally. Two scholars of apocalyptic religion, Phil Arnold, of the Reunion Institute in Houston, and James Tabor, of the University of North Carolina, studied the broadcast and believed Koresh could be reasoned with if approached within his own frame of reference. After several futile efforts to persuade the FBI to let them try, they arranged with Ron Engleman, host of a radio talk show on KGBS (to which the Davidians regularly listened), for a half-hour's uninterrupted plea to David Koresh to rethink his understanding of the Fifth Seal (Revelation 6:9-11), which he believed to be unfolding at Mt. Carmel.

In the text, the souls of the faithful who have been slain for the word of God cry out to God, "How long before thou wilt . . . avenge our blood?" They are given white robes and told to "rest for a little season" until the number of their fellow servants who have been killed as they have been should be complete. The Sixth Seal that follows brings about the destruction of humankind. Arnold and Tabor in their radio colloquy sought to persuade Koresh that the term translated "a little season" meant in the original Greek (*chronos*) a period of as much as a year, leaving time for Koresh to complete his work before the Sixth Seal supervened. Koresh apparently accepted this idea, for on the day after Passover he sent out a letter via his lawyer saying that God had permitted him to explain "in structured form the decoded messages of the Seven Seals," and that upon completion of that task he would surrender.

The FBI saw this as just another in a long series of delaying tactics and went ahead with their plans to use tear gas. They did send in writing materials, however, on Sunday, April 18, and Koresh worked most of that night dictating to Ruth Riddle, who typed his words on a battery-powered word processor. He completed a five-page introduction to the Seven Seals, a poem of thirteen quatrains, and a seven-page exposition of the First Seal. At that rate, Arnold and Tabor have estimated, he should have completed the task in two or three weeks.

But he did not get the chance. The next morning the FBI gas assault began, and David Koresh must have concluded that his original scenario of imminent destruction was correct. Ruth Riddle barely escaped the ensuing fire with her life—and a small computer disk in her pocket. Late in 1993 her attorney was able to recover that disk from the FBI and turned it over to Arnold and Tabor, who with her help carefully transcribed it. It is a systematic explanation of Koresh's apocalyptic vision, ending with an intimation of a readiness to "come out" of seclusion adapted from words of the prophet Joel (2:16).

> "Let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride out of her closet." Yes, the bride is definitely to be revealed for we know that Christ is in the Heavenly Sanctuary anticipating His Marriage of which God has spoken. Should we not eagerly ourselves be ready to accept this truth and come out of our closet and be revealed to the world as those who love Christ in truth and righteousness?

Arnold and Tabor point out that this writing—tragically truncated as it is—made clear that Koresh did not consider himself to be Jesus Christ or God as some have supposed. The term "Christ" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for "messiah," meaning "anointed," as high priests and kings were anointed for their office. Later the prophets spoke of a specific and ideal messiah—one who would be a "Branch of David"—who would bring peace to the nations. Koresh believed that Jesus of Nazareth was that Christ, but that another "Christ" would appear at the end of time and open the Seven Seals, and that he was that latter Christ.

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On April 19, 1994, the FBI began at 6:00 A.M. to spray a riot-control agent, CS, into the buildings of Mt. Carmel by means of two heavy Combat Engineering Vehicles (CEVs) equipped with long booms ending in spray nozzles. In order to inject this substance into the living quarters, the tanks broke into the frame walls at several points. The original plan was to continue slow spraying over forty-eight hours unless the residents "compromised" the process by resisting. As the tanks approached, the FBI insisted, "This is not an assault! No one will enter the Compound. Do not fire weapons!" Nevertheless, the residents did not meekly submit to this treatment, but fired back at the tanks (without effect on their heavy armor). This temerity caused the FBI to shift to Plan B, which involved the immediate spray of all the gas as fast as possible. No one came out, however.

Around noon, fire broke out at several points and—in the brisk thirty-mile-an-hour wind—quickly enveloped the frame "fortress." At 12:13 the FBI called the fire department. Fire trucks arrived at 12:34 P.M., but were held at the FBI checkpoint "because of the danger of gunfire." By the time they reached the fire at 12:41 P.M., there was little to be salvaged. Nine residents left the buildings during the fire, some suffering serious burns. They were arrested, manacled, and held for trial.

After the ruins had cooled, the forces of law enforcement combed the site for evidence and subsequently bulldozed the grounds "for health reasons." Remains of some seventy-five bodies were recovered and examined by the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office in Fort Worth. The magnitude of the disaster and the obscurity of its causes and its handling by the federal agencies led to demands for investigation and explanation. Congressional hearings were held, and President Clinton took the unusual step of directing the two Cabinet officers responsible to investigate and report what had happened.

For seven weeks the public had been absorbed by daily accounts of what was going on in Texas. Several hundred reporters from across the country and around the world gathered in Waco and were kept by law enforcement officers at a "safe" distance of about two miles from the scene of action. The main source of information was a daily briefing by official spokesmen of the federal agencies at the convention center near the Hilton Hotel in town. Most of the mainstream media contented themselves with uncritically relaying these government handouts to their readers and viewers. A few representatives of the "alternate" press tried to do a little independent investigating, but their voices were not widely heard, and several were excluded from the daily FBI briefings after asking impertinent questions about the official version of events.

The definition-of-the-situation for government agencies and the media alike was strongly colored by negative stereotypes about "cults" that had become endemic over the past decades because of news features and talk shows focusing on Jonestown, the followers of Rev. Moon, "Krishnas," and Scientologists. An organized and articulate corps of cult critics had grown up during this period, purporting to know what "cults" are all about (though actually knowing very little about the history or dynamics of religion). At Waco the anti-cult movement was much in evidence, uttering sharp cries about "mind control" and "child abuse" to all who would listen (who were many because of the lack of other sources of information). One of the most active, a deprogrammer named Rick Ross, claimed to have been advising the government about the Branch Davidians because he had deprogrammed one of them. He had put the investigating ATF agent in contact with ex-members in 1992, who contributed some of the questionable information on which the original affidavit was based.

The gist of this definition-of-the-situation was that the cult leader (Koresh) was a manipulator who had tricked or entranced a bunch of vulnerable people into mental captivity where they fed his lust for money, women, and power, and that these victims should be rescued from their captivity—which fit well with the FBI belief that they faced a typical hostage-rescue situation in which a clever con-man was holding innocent victims as shields. These characterizations matched poorly the reality of a band of adults voluntarily and devotedly following a visionary they thought touched by the finger of God.

V

Some five months after the fire two voluminous reports totaling nearly 1,300 pages issued by the Departments of Treasury and Justice documented the actions of their subordinate elements (the ATF and the FBI, respectively). Such an outpouring of postmortem analysis has seldom been seen from the Executive branch, and it helped to diminish criticism of the federal role. The Treasury report was notable for excoriating ATF tactical leaders for having proceeded with the raid once they knew that the element of surprise had been lost and then for having tried to cover up their mistakes. Eventually the three top executives of the ATF "exited" the Bureau, and the two tactical leaders who made the mistakes were suspended without pay until December 24, 1994, when they were reinstated with full back pay and benefits, though in desk jobs at a lower grade than formerly.

But the Treasury report insisted that, though mistakes had been made, the ATF was correct in its effort to apprehend violaters of federal firearms laws and in its choice of a "dynamic entry" as the best way to do so. Three other options were considered, the report stated. The first was to avoid the use of violence and serve the warrants in a simple visit to Mt. Carmel.

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This was rejected, the report said, because of Koresh's (supposed) history of hatred for law enforcement and propensity to violence. Another possibility was to seize Koresh while he was away from Mt. Carmel. The ATF planners were under the (mistaken) impression that he seldom left the center, and the report faulted them for not obtaining fuller intelligence, but concluded that even with better data that plan might not have worked. The third option was a siege of Mt. Carmel, but this was rejected because of the possibility that evidence of illegal weapons could be destroyed and that the siege might end in mass suicide.

The Treasury report explained that the ATF was aware that Mt. Carmel was a religious community, but that that fact neither attracted federal interest nor immunized the group from enforcement of the law. This commendable stance of neutrality was belied a few pages later by the explanation that Koresh and his followers were deemed especially dangerous because of their religious beliefs.

> The extraordinary discipline that Koresh imposed on his followers . . . made him far more threatening than a lone individual who had a liking for illegal weapons. The Compound became a rural fortress, often patrolled by armed guards, in which Koresh's word—or the word that [he] purported to extrapolate from the Scripture—was the only law. . . . Were [he] to decide to turn his weapons on society, he would have devotees to follow him, and they would be equipped with weapons that could inflict serious damage.

The tone of the Treasury report, despite its criticism of tactical errors, was conveyed by its first page, a black-bordered dedicatory panel bearing the words "In Memory of" and listing the names of the four agents killed in the assault. (There was no black-bordered page bearing the names of the six members of the religious group killed on the same occasion.) The report repeatedly asserted that David Koresh and his followers "ambushed" the federal agents. "On February 28, [they] knew that ATF agents were coming and decided to kill them." A more accurate statement, however, might be that they decided to fend them off.

The main burden of the Treasury report was to justify the raid that started it all. The reason for the raid was to serve arrest and search warrants directed against illegal weaponry. The Fourth Amendment of the Constitution states that searches and seizures shall be based upon warrants, and that warrants shall not issue except upon "probable cause" (to believe that a crime has been, or is about to be, committed). It was important to nail down the validity of those warrants (which were sealed by court order throughout the siege and unsealed only in June 1993, so they were unavailable for public scrutiny until well after the event). The Treasury report included analyses from two firearms experts, both employed by Tioga Engineering Co., who reviewed the evidence available to the ATF and submitted by it to obtain the warrants. After checking the UPS inventories of weapons and parts delivered to Mt. Carmel, both engineers came to the conclusion that there were no illegal weapons on the list.

But they labored manfully onward to reach the desired and necessary conclusion by way of a concatenation of conjectures: *if* the Branch Davidians had the necessary milling machine and metal lathe, and *if* they had "appropriate tooling" for them, and *if* there was someone able and willing to use them, and *if* they had a sample "drop-in automatic sear" to clone, then it was "highly probable" that they *could* convert the legal semi-automatic weapons they were known to have had into illegal automatic weapons, and it was "possible" that they had done so. Therefore, concluded the experts, the warrants were valid and sufficient.

This unsurprising conclusion has since been highly controverted. Suffice it here to note the comment of a retired FBI agent:

> There was not even one fact in the probable cause affidavit . . . stating that a violation had or was taking place at Mt. Carmel. The rationale by the ATF was that if two or more legitimate objects exist in a location, then at some unknown time they might be used to produce an illegal object, and that would be reason to obtain a search warrant. For example, probably half the homes in America contain a long-barreled gun and hacksaw. The hacksaw, at some time or other, might be used to saw off enough of the barrel to make it illegal. Based on this rationale, the ATF could search half the homes in the United States.

Others have pointed out that there was no fact in the affidavit less than eight months old, meaning the information was quite stale for purposes of a warrant. Still others contend that the ATF agent who wrote the affidavit to obtain the warrant was ignorant both of the National Firearms Act and of the items he contended were illegal. But there also are those who, while unsympathetic to the ATF, insist that under current standards of case law the information was neither stale nor insufficient (which, if true, merely indicates how the courts have watered down the standards of the Fourth Amendment).

The Treasury Department's report was a model of soul-searching compared to the Justice Department's, which entertained little or no grounds for self-doubt and indeed portrayed the FBI's actions in the resolutely laudatory tones of a regimental history. It showcased the magnitude of the event, stating that

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"there were a minimum of 719 law enforcement personnel committed on-site at Waco on any given day during the stand-off" and that "never before have so many heavily armed and totally committed individuals barricaded themselves in a fortified compound in direct challenge to lawful federal warrants and to duly authorized law enforcement officials."

A chronology of the siege, covering eighty-six pages, suggested the perplexity and frustration that built up in the besiegers as one negotiating ploy after another failed to work. A point of pride to the FBI was the assertion that "after February 28, no weapons of any type were fired by any law enforcement officer, whether state, local, or federal." Apparently not counted as "weapons of any type" were dozens of "flash-bangs" (termed "distraction devices" in federalese—grenades that cause a loud report and bright burst of light) or 300-400 "ferret rounds"—tear-gas cannisters—"deployed" through windows of the residence. The report did not add that the Branch Davidians also did not fire any weapons during the siege (until their home was invaded on April 19), nor did they even shoot out the annoying floodlights or loudspeakers.

The main burdens of the report were to justify the use of gas and to place the onus for the final conflagration on the victims. The first was accomplished by reciting the steps leading up to the Attorney General's approval of the plan to use gas and introducing a statement by the President giving four reasons for that action:

> First, there was a limit to the length of time the federal authorities could maintain the quality and intensity of the coverage of the scene. Resources were limited, and the experts might be needed in other parts of the country. Second, the people who had reviewed that situation had concluded that no progress had been made recently and that, in their opinion, no progress would be made using normal means of getting Koresh and other cult members to come out. Third, it was felt that the danger of their doing something to themselves or to others was likely to increase with the passage of time. Fourth, there were reasons to believe that the children who were still at the compound were being abused and were being forced to live in unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

The second burden was discharged by assertions that "the Davidians started fires at three separate locations within the compound" and by an appended report of an "independent" arson team that concluded "the FBI's actions did not cause the fire" and "the Davidians could have escaped the fire if they had wanted." (These contentions have been vigorously contested.) The report was bolstered with a supportive sixty-three-page commentary by an attorney in private practice, Edward S. G. Dennis, Jr., who had been Assistant Attorney General (Criminal Division) under the Bush Administration. He concluded: "Under the circumstances, the FBI exhibited extraordinary restraint and handled this crisis with great professionalism."

VI

Ten outside experts were invited to comment on the Treasury and Justice Department reports. Six focused on law enforcement methods, organization, tactics, communications, and control. Most of them were careful to confine their criticisms to matters of inadvertence, exigency, and small moment. But four behavioral experts were asked to address problems of "dealing with persons whose motivations and thought processes are unconventional," and their comments provided a refreshing relief from the heavy bureaucratese of the rest of the material. These commentaries are worth reading in their entirety, but can only be sketched here.

The only scholar of religion to be included was Professor Nancy T. Ammerman, Sociology of Religion, Candler School of Theology, Emory University. She was concerned about the lack of understanding by the federal agencies of what they were dealing with at Waco and their failure to consult experts who could help them. Though she is not herself a specialist in new religious movements, she recommended ten American and two British scholars who are. She noted that religious experimentation and innovation have been common in American life and are protected by the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. She also suggested several respects in which such movements are very different from what the federal agencies (and the media) were expecting:

- New or dissident religious groups are often "millennialist" or "apocalyptic"—they foresee the imminent end of the world and the emergence of a new world with themselves in leadership roles. Therefore, they have a different view of reality and place different values on danger and death than others do.
- Such new groups almost always provoke their neighbors because they think old ways of doing things are obsolete or evil. The resistance of outsiders to the new revelation often causes the new group to see itself as beleaguered by a hostile outside world. It may develop rituals and rhetoric of self-defense that sound and look quite aggressive, but are aimed more at reinforcing their own sense of solidarity and righteousness than at posing any real threat to outsiders.
- Many new religious groups ask for commitments from their members that seem abnormal by common standards, and those demands may mean the disruption of "normal" family and work lives. Throughout most of history, in fact, most people have lived in such tightly-knit communities where work, family, religion, politics, and leisure are all

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bound together under one domain. In the long view, *not* belonging to such a community is more abnormal than belonging to one, and such close bonds are widely sought by millions of people.

- The vast majority of those who make such commitments do so voluntarily. The notion of "cult brainwashing" has been thoroughly discredited in the academic community. Although strong psychological needs may lead persons to seek such groups, and their judgment may indeed be altered by their participation, that does not constitute coercion, and many adherents will drift away of their own accord in time after their needs have been satisfied without need for outside interference.
- "Charisma" is not just an individual trait, but a property of the constantly evolving relationship between leader and followers. New meaning emerges daily in the interaction of sacred texts, unfolding events, and the imagination of leaders and followers. The leader remains a prophet only so long as his or her interpretations "make sense" of the group's experience. Outside pressure may tend less to fragment the group than to confirm the view that outsiders are the enemy and to strengthen the group's solidarity.

Dr. Robert Cancro, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, New York University Medical Center, pointed out that a "major characteristic of these groups, so frequently mislabeled as cults, is that they have a shared, very strongly held belief system." Such a belief system is not necessarily a cover or front for criminal activity, but simply a rejection of the norms and ideas accepted by the rest of society.

> The Branch Davidians had an apocalyptic worldview in which they expected attack from the outside world. The reason for arming themselves was to protect themselves from an expected attack. They had been training themselves for a long time to defend . . . against such an effort.

When the decision was made to use gas to drive the Davidians out of their residence, it was assumed that parents would leave the premises in order to protect their children from the noxious effects of the gas. But if people are willing to die for their beliefs, "the death of their children may not have the same meaning as it would for other people. . . . To some individuals, death has a very different meaning. It can be seen in terms of birth into a new and better life." The gas attack is more likely to be interpreted as part of an escalation of wrongful force on the part of the Babylonians. "In this context . . . the concept of suicide . . . may well be quite different from that of the ordinary individual. Not to be blasphemous, but it is highly doubtful that Christ considered himself a suicide."

Dr. Cancro also redefined the effect on the Davidians of the gas attack.

> Law enforcement might argue that a gas attack is not an assault because the gas is nonlethal. To the people inside the compound, armored vehicles firing gas grenades into their home could only be perceived as an assault. It certainly would be reasonable for the occupants . . . to assume at this point that whatever follows the gas attack will be even worse and that they are now faced with the choice of being killed by enemy weapons or by their own hand and by a method of their own choosing.

Professor Lawrence E. Sullivan, Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, castigated the federal agencies for their almost total disregard of the religious dimension at Waco, resulting in a complete tone-deafness to the things most important to the people they were trying to reach. For instance, when David Koresh sent out several letters early in the siege (which are photographically reproduced *in extenso* as an appendix to the Justice Department report), it was not discerned that he quoted biblical passages that emphasized the power of the hand and the side of the messiah, suggesting that his wounds in hand and side were seen by him not as evidences of weakness but of strength, and that he was therefore unlikely to surrender to escalating force by the federal agencies.

The FBI's view of the situation as a "hostage rescue" came in part from its focus on the individual psychology of the leader rather than the collective dynamics of the group as a whole, which can be much more powerful in their effects than individual motivations. Likewise, the FBI was unaware of the way in which "religion galvanizes groups into communities of coordinated actions, whether those actions be liturgical spectacles or mass movements." He suggested that not only the FBI but public policy planners in general were increasingly proceeding in immense ignorance of religious elements in the views and motivations of the populace they supposedly serve.

The fourth behavioral science commentator, Dr. Alan Stone, Professor of Psychiatry and of Law at Harvard, sent his commentary in on November 8, 1993, a month after the Justice Department report was issued, because he was not satisfied with the information available at the deadline date. His paper was issued separately (without the blue cover that had bound the five earlier issuances) and the Justice Department soon ran out of copies, but it was a significant contribution. Dr. Stone pointed to an extensive literature in criminology and psychiatry on the "gamble with death" psychology of persons disconnected from the rest of society. "Inner-city youths often provoke a shoot-out, 'gambling' with death (suicide) by provoking police into killing them. . . . Koresh and his followers were in a desperate kill-or-be-killed mode."

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> The FBI's critical assumption was that David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, like ordinary persons, would respond to pressure in the form of a closing circle of armed vehicles and conclude that survival was in their self-interest, and surrender. This ill-fated assumption runs contrary to all of the relevant behavioral science and psychiatric literature and the understanding it offered.

Dr. Stone also criticized the concept of an "ambush." Given the heavy firepower of the Davidians, it seemed to him that if they had wanted to they could have slain every ATF agent in sight. "The ATF agents brought to the compound in cattle cars could have been cattle going to slaughter if the Branch Davidians had taken full advantage of their tactical superiority. They apparently did not maximize the kill of ATF agents. This . . . suggests that the Branch Davidians were not cold-blooded killers; rather, they were desperate religious fanatics expecting an apocalyptic ending, in which they were destined to die defending their sacred ground and destined to achieve salvation."

He was especially critical of the decision to saturate the residence with CS gas, considering that gas masks are not made for infants and toddlers and that the chemical can cause choking, vomiting, temporary blindness, skin burns, disorientation, chemical pneumonia, and cyanosis. He cited medical literature to this effect and commented that the information given the Attorney General about the effects of CS gas was very understated in this respect. He concluded with an understatement of his own: "I find it hard to accept a deliberate plan to insert CS gas for forty-eight hours in a building with so many children. It certainly makes it difficult to believe that the health and safety of the children was our primary concern."

The proper postscript to the imposing postmortem production of 1,300 pages was provided by one of the government attorneys in the course of the criminal trial. When defense attorneys noted discrepancies between the prosecutor's case and the federal reports, an assistant U.S. attorney explained "that the Treasury review is a book written for release to the public," implying that it was an effort at public relations and not to be considered binding on the government.

VII

Early in 1994 the federal government brought to trial ten men and one woman from among the twenty-five adult Branch Davidian survivers. The principal charges against all eleven were conspiring to kill "with malice aforethought" federal agents in the discharge of their duties, and aiding and abetting such killing. (Another woman, Kathryn Schroeder, pled guilty to a lesser charge and agreed to testify for the government.) Several other counts were brought against various of the eleven defendants, such as using or carrying firearms in the commission of a violent crime. The trial was moved to San Antonio, and an anonymous jury was selected. Ten attorneys represented the eleven defendants, and the trial—like the siege—went on for seven weeks.

The evidence adduced did not settle who fired the first shot on February 28, 1993, or who started the fire on April 19, but some new light was shed on claims set forth in the government's version of events. And some light was lacking that should have been shed because of evidence strangely missing. One defense witness was Jack Zimmerman, an attorney who had entered the residence at Mt. Carmel with the FBI's consent to represent Steve Schneider, Koresh's chief lieutenant. Zimmerman, a former colonel of Marines, was given a tour of the premises and shown indications of the results of incoming gunfire. He testified that he had seen a "spray pattern" of bullet holes entering the right half of the double front door from outside and no bullet holes going outward. That metal door had somehow disappeared, and Texas Ranger Fred Cummings, who reported on the search for evidence by the Rangers after the fire, could not explain what had become of it. It was steel and could not have melted in the fire any more than other steel doors in the place did. He admitted that the ATF and FBI had had access to the area following the fire and before the Rangers took over on April 20.

Zimmerman also testified to having seen eight or nine bullet holes in the roof that "caused the building material to be pooched in or down" showing that "the rounds came from above the ceiling down into the room." Of course, this evidence, like much else, was consumed in the fire. When the Texas Rangers did take charge of the systematic search of the ruins after the fire, said Captain David Byrnes, who was in command of the Rangers, all agents of the ATF were by mutual consent excluded from the site (after they finished checking for unexpended explosives) to forestall charges that the ATF had had a chance to "salt the scene." The FBI was not thus excluded, however, and continued to assist the Rangers in their search.

The first ATF agent to testify was Roland Balesteros, who was assigned to lead the way through the front door. He said he had come out of the cattle trailer in full SWAT gear and raced toward the front door carrying his shotgun across his chest. When he was still on the way, David Koresh, unarmed, opened the door and asked, "What's going on?" The agent claimed that he called out, "Police! Lay down! Search Warrant!" (though he admitted he had had not mentioned those cries in earlier interviews with the Texas Rangers). He said that Koresh "smirked" at him and closed the door. A moment later, he testified, bullets came out through the door; one hit his thumb, and he tumbled into the dog pen beside the porch and

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lay beneath a window during the remainder of the fight. He said he knew the bullets were coming outward because of holes in the door and splinters of wood pointing outward. (Cross-examination brought out that the door was steel, and there was no wood in it to splinter.)

When asked who was assigned to announce their identity and the purpose of the raid, Balesteros replied that no one was so assigned. "We basically all announced." He admitted that in their rehearsals during the previous week they had not practiced what the ATF manual prescribed: "Officers are required to wait a reasonable period of time to permit the occupants to respond before forcing entry." He was not assigned to knock and wait but to gain entry, and he was followed by other agents with a battering ram to break the door open if necessary. He said they were expecting resistance, but not gunfire. Fire from within thus upset their plans.

Later AFT agent Kenneth King testified that he had been on one of two teams that were assigned to put ladders up and gain entry to the second-floor "gun room" at the same time as the front-door entry. On cross-examination he admitted that they had not announced their intention when they got on the roof, but had proceeded to try to break in through the windows. "Even if the people at the front door had been welcomed in by David Koresh, none of that would have made any difference . . . the window would have been broken and the flash-bangs would have been thrown and you would have entered the window?" he was asked. "Yes, sir, that was our job." Here again, it was the gunfire that stopped them. It became clear that the AFT had not planned a peaceful entry but expected to cow the residents with an overwhelming show of force. When that did not work, the agents had no Plan B.

Furthermore, it seemed likely that some of the damage done to the federal force was done by "friendly fire." Some bullet holes in the ATF vehicles may have come from directions other than the Mt. Carmel building. And ATF agent Constantino admitted that in the "gun room" he and two others entered on the second floor he may have hit agent Jordan in the arm. An FBI firearms specialist attested that the bullet recovered from agent Jordan was a 9mm. hydroshock bullet that only the ATF was using on February 28, and it may well have come from agent Constantino's gun, but that gun had been damaged in the fire and would not mark test bullets consistently. Some of the shots may also have hit agent King of the other team out on the roof preparing to enter the adjacent room.

The government called numerous gun dealers from across the country as witnesses to the many orders for guns they had filled for Mt. Carmel. None of the purchases was illegal, and Mike DeGuerin, representing Paul Fatta (who had been absent from Mt. Carmel throughout the entire fifty-one days), demonstrated that the Davidians were buying firearms wholesale as a business enterprise for resale at gun shows. The prosecution introduced dozens of exhibits of plastic-wrapped firearms described as weapons found in the ashes of Mt. Carmel that had been converted from semi-automatic (legal) to full automatic (illegal), and some of them were linked by serial numbers to sales made to Mt. Carmel by the testifying gun dealers. A few bullets were recovered from the dead ATF agents, and these were identified as emanating from weapons of the general type being fired from within Mt. Carmel, but no one-to-one identifications were made. None of the defendants was linked directly to any of the firearms or bullets that killed the four ATF agents.

Photographs were introduced by the prosecution of an engine lathe, a hydraulic press, and a milling machine on the premises that could have been used to modify legal firearms to make them illegal, as well as silencers or "sound suppressors" (which are illegal) in various stages of manufacture. Some twenty firearms in evidence were described as having been converted from semi-automatic to full automatic. Cross-examination brought out that it was impossible to determine where or when such conversion occurred or whether the automatic weapons in evidence had actually been fired. Two heavy .50 caliber guns were introduced, as well as .50 ammunition. Cross-examination made clear that there was nothing illegal about owning such weapons or ammunition for them and no evidence that they had been fired.

The Tarrant County Medical Examiner, Dr. Nizam Peerwani, offered lengthy and depressing testimony about the bodies found and autopsies conducted. Many adult decedents had been identified by dental records. Some adults, including David Koresh and Steve Schneider, had died of close-range gunshot wounds to the head. Several women's bodies were found in the hallway leading to the trapdoor access to the underground school bus at the north end of the building that had been constructed as a tornado shelter, but they could not reach it because the trapdoor had been buried by debris from the collapsing of the wall pushed in by a tank prior to the fire.

In the center of the buildings under the four-story tower was a cinder-block room that had been used for cold storage of food. It was the strongest, safest place in the complex, furthest from the gas and the tanks. To it had fled many of the women and all of the children. It had one door, which faced toward the front of the building. Some thirty or more bodies were recovered from that small room. Many were covered with blankets, sleeping bags, extra clothing, especially the small children, as their mothers apparently tried to protect them from the gas and the fire. And at some point this cinder-block room collapsed, the tower fell upon it, and those within died of suffocation, blunt trauma from the impact of debris, close-range

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gunshot wounds, or the effects of fire.

Agent Craig, who drove the Combat Engineering Vehicle that began the process of spraying the CS gas on April 19, testified that two CEVs had been "jerry-rigged" at Fort Hood with a boom that carried several cylinders of CS gas. When the boom penetrated the wall, a cylinder (which was about two feet long and eight inches in diameter) would empty in three seconds with a cone-shaped spray of mist reaching forty-five feet ahead. The mist was propelled by carbon dioxide under pressure and was composed of CS agent—a white crystalline powder dissolved in a liquid solution. The solution came ready-mixed in a canister that was placed in the bottle, and then pressurized. Sixteen of these large canisters were sprayed into the building by the first CEV and a few by the second (which "threw a track" and was disabled before it could do more; its crew started up a third CEV, which could not inject gas).

Smaller canisters of CS were fired into the windows from grenade launchers in Bradley tracked vehicles, one on each side of the buildings. One agent testified that he fired seventy to seventy-five such canisters and supposed that the other three agents similarly occupied had done the same, making a total of some three hundred fired during the morning. Most such projectiles—called "ferret rounds"—went in through the windows. Some were fired at the frame walls in the hope they would penetrate, but most of those just bounced off.

Agent Craig testified that after he had "inserted" the first bottle of CS gas, he heard over his radio that the residents had begun to fire back. (He was not aware that his vehicle had been hit by gunfire because of its heavy armor, the loud noise of the motor, and the radio earphones he was wearing). He switched to Plan B, injecting as much gas as fast as possible. He emptied his other three bottles and then returned to get four more. Each trip took some forty-five minutes, and he made three more trips.

On the fourth trip, he received new instructions. He was told to push into the front of the building, to open it up so the observers could see inside and to press on in toward the base of the tower. The other CEV was directed to do the same from the back, resulting in the collapse of the gymnasium. Agent Craig inched into the front door with his eleven-foot-wide bulldozer blade, pushing in the doors, door frame, and a window on each side. He went in about fifteen feet and released a bottle of gas. He did not go further because the turret had caught on the floor of the second story, and he was afraid of knocking the building down around his vehicle. So he withdrew and moved down to the corner of the building, pushed in the wall there, and released his fourth bottle. Although he did not call this "Plan C," the directive to "make a deep penetration" into the structure and to press toward the center (where the women and children had taken refuge) was a distinct departure from the plans that had been discussed in the meetings prior to April 19. It represented a third strategy, apparently decided upon about 10:30 A.M. and communicated by oral orders. Who gave these orders was not determined, but they probably brought on the final act of the tragedy.

At around noon the buildings at Mt. Carmel caught fire and in a high wind quickly burned to the ground. The government devoted much effort at trial to making the case that the residents of Mt. Carmel had started the fire. The defense countered with the contention that the tanks had knocked over Coleman lanterns that were used for illumination because the FBI had cut off the electricity, and that the fuel in them had spilled onto bales of hay stacked around the walls to stop incoming bullets, setting them afire. The prosecution introduced tapes and transcripts of recordings made from electronic listening devices. The quality of sound was poor, even after having been enhanced by a private sound-recording specialist. There seemed to be voices saying that "The fuel has to go all around to get started," and "Got to put enough fuel in there." Then a voice says, "So, we only light 'em as they come in," or (a later version by the same specialist), "So, we only light 'em as soon as they tell me." (The prosecution distributed copies of the tape transcripts to the press to show that the Branch Davidians set the fire.) The defense contended that—at worst—preparations may have been made to ignite lantern fuel as a countermeasure against invading tanks. (Graeme Craddock, one of the defendants, had told a Texas Ranger that he was directed by Wayne Martin to pour lantern fuel on any tank that came in through the wall and to light it—a last-ditch tactic that might result in the defenders' death as well as the attackers'.)

There were claims that the FBI notified the Burn Unit at Parkland Memorial Hospital early on the morning of the nineteenth to be prepared to receive burn victims and asked for directions for landing helicopters at the hospital. FBI agents wore fireproof suits that day. A helicopter with a Forward-Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) camera was circling over the complex ready to photograph any outbreak of fire. All of this suggests that the FBI was expecting fire on the nineteenth, but not necessarily that the FBI intended to cause the fire. The defense attorneys seem to have concluded that the FBI had intelligence from some source that there was a likelihood of fire, whether from the two interlopers, Louis Alaniz and Jesse Amen or Alman, who "snuck" in during the siege and left before it ended (and were viewed by the attorneys as FBI "plants"), or from the bugs in the milk cartons. It is possible that the anti-tank plan Craddock later described was being talked about prior to the nineteenth, and the FBI got wind of it. But the FBI did not arrange for fire-fighting equipment to be

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at hand, nor did it deviate from its showdown plans, but in fact went on to Plan C when A and B didn't work.

The government called a member of the "independent" arson team named William Cass, who stated that films taken at the time of the fire, including the FLIR photos, showed the fire starting almost simultaneously in three different locations at Mt. Carmel at 12:11 P.M. Because of the strong wind and the holes punched by the CEVs, the fire engulfed the entire structure in about five minutes. Defense counsel displayed an earlier portion of the FLIR video showing a flash or flare of heat in the gymnasium area at 12:08. Cass said he had never seen that portion of the video. He was asked if he had seen the observers' logs that contained two reports of fire starting in the gymnasium area at 12:11, and he said those logs had been handled by Paul Gray, the chief of the arson investigating team, and he himself had never seen them.

Paul Gray was identified as a person who often testified regarding arson incidents for the AFT and whose wife worked in the Houston office of the AFT. More significantly, Paul Gray devoted a page of his report to the flammability potential of tear gas and concluded that neither the ferret rounds of CN tear gas nor the pressurized CN gas delivered by the CEVs would have augmented the fire, and indeed would have had a retardant effect.

This was a curious conclusion, since all other sources and all testimony at the trial referred to the gas in question as CS, a very different substance. As Jack Zimmerman stated on the witness stand, "It's not tear gas." (Tear gas, CN, is Alphachloroacetenone; CS is Orthochlorobenzyladine Malononitrile.) An Army Field Manual states: "Exposure to CS may make [victims] incapable of evacuating the area. . . . The dispersers should not be used to introduce a riot control agent directly into a closed structure except in extreme circumstances. . . . Do not use around hospitals or other places where innocent persons may be affected. . . . Do not use where fires may start or asphyxiation may occur." Yet it was solely into "closed structures" that the FBI directed the CS gas at Mt. Carmel. One of the manufacturers of CS, the Aldrich Chemical Company of Milwaukee, warns purchasers about its use: "Emits toxic fumes under fire conditions: . . . carbon monoxide . . . hydrogen cyanide . . . hydrogen chloride gas." The United States is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 that outlaws the use of CS in warfare.

VIII

After impassioned closing statements by both sides and a lengthy instruction from Judge Walter Smith, the jury retired to deliberate. They asked to hear again the tape recording of Wayne Martin's 911 call to the sheriff's office and for a few clarifications of the law. On February 26, 1994, the jury found that all defendants were not guilty of the two most serious accusations, conspiracy to murder federal agents and aiding and abetting such conspiracy. In so doing, the jury rejected the government's oft-repeated charge of "ambush." The jury did convict five of the defendants of a lesser offense—voluntary manslaughter—that the judge had defined as acting "in the sudden heat of passion caused by adequate provocation." The jury also convicted two defendants on firearms charges, but acquitted four of all charges.

Seven defendants were convicted on Count Three—that they "did knowingly use and carry a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence." The judge had instructed the jury that to find a defendant guilty of that crime, it must be convinced that the government had proved each of the following elements beyond a reasonable doubt: (1) "That the Defendant . . . committed the crime alleged in Count One" (conspiring to murder federal agents), and (2) "That the Defendant . . . knowingly used or carried a firearm during and in relation to the Defendant's commission of the crime alleged in Count One." Since the jury had determined that the defendants were not guilty of Count One, the judge set aside the convictions on Count Three because, he said, the jury had decided there was no conspiracy.

Almost four months later, on June 16-17, 1994, the judge convened a hearing for sentencing. In the interim, presentencing reports had been prepared on each convicted defendant by the probation officers. But an odd thing had happened. The judge had reinstated the convictions on Count Three. Ruth Riddle, who had been acquitted of all other charges and was being deported to Canada for overstaying her visa, was retrieved from the immigration service and brought back for sentencing on that charge. The other six convicted on that charge faced additional years in prison.

Before sentencing, each of the nine convicted defendants had the opportunity to address an "allocution" to the court. One or two sought to retry the case, insisting among other things that the court did not have jurisdiction and that Janet Reno and Bill Clinton should be called as witnesses. Others maintained that they had not been responsible for the deaths of the ATF agents. None expressed contrition or remorse. Perhaps the best articulation of their view was that of Livingston Fagan, the Jamaican who was probably the only Branch Davidian with any formal theological training.

> First of all, there is no doubt in our minds that we are innocent. . . . Never, at any point, have I sought to distance myself from David Koresh, his teachings, or from the actions of the residents of Mount Carmel. . . . The actions that

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> we were forced to take were justified, given the circumstances that we were placed in by the actions of the agents of the government. . . .
>
> We were pursuing realities pertaining to the spirit that this Court did not—does not recognize, as they did not recognize 2,000 years ago. Right from the beginning, the spiritual aspect of this was totally and absolutely rejected. But it was the very core of why we were at Mt. Carmel, and essentially, why we acted the way that we acted. . . .
>
> We don't particularly care what you want to do. You're going to do it anyway. But we also serve a God who sits on a throne like you, a judge. He's got a book in his hand, sealed with seven seals. Men don't know his judgment. Consequently, Mount Carmel happened the way that it did. As you have judged, so, too, you will be judged. . . . And we do not accept this notion, this facade, that is being presented in this court, that somehow we have agreed with this judgment, with this sentencing, with anything that has taken place. We have not. . . . We are innocent. Absolutely, without any doubts whatsoever, we know we are innocent.

(Livingston Fagan has declined to appeal his sentence, saying that the Lord will look after him.)

Each of the defense counsel argued in mitigation of sentence for their clients. Some lamented the reinstatement of the convictions on Count Three. Mike DeGuerin, counsel for Paul Fatta, disagreed with the contentions of the probation officer, Ms. Suniga, (which were largely adopted by the judge) that Mr. Fatta conspired to kill federal agents. "I think the jury rejected those ideas." Joseph Turner, on behalf of Ruth Riddle, said, "It's difficult for me . . . to get up and argue for a five-year sentence when I don't even think the five-year sentence should apply to Ruth Riddle." Several counsel pointed out that these defendants were not leaders of the Branch Davidians and that the living were being made to answer for the actions of those beyond the reach of vengeance.

The government, for its part, again insisted that religion had nothing to do with the case and then recited a litany of theological allegations to show the evil intent of the Branch Davidians.

> [The] whole purpose of the message was, "We're going to have a confrontation with law enforcement officers." . . . Obviously, it was not a peaceful group if the message is, "You can't die for God if you can't kill for God."

The government reiterated its call for maximum sentences for all defendants.

The jury had found all defendants innocent of conspiracy to kill federal agents on the highest standard of proof—"beyond a reasonable doubt." Judge Smith stated that sentencing was based on a lesser standard—"preponderance of the evidence." So he felt free to assert a view of the case that the jury had rejected. He acknowledged that mistakes may have been made by the federal agencies, but they were not before the court in this case and were not deemed relevant to the issues that were before it.

> The mistakes made by the Defendants now before this Court . . . were serious violations of federal criminal law, and resulted in the homicide of four young agents, the injury of numerous other agents, and the death of numerous residents of the building referred to during the trial as the "Compound."
>
> These Defendants, and other adult Branch Davidians, engaged in a conspiracy to cause the deaths of federal agents. It was part of the beliefs of the Branch Davidians, expressed and taught by their leader, that they must bring about a violent conflict with federal agents, thereby forcing the agents to use deadly force against them, and by dying in the ensuing battle to be "translated" immediately to Heaven.
>
> To this end, immense preparations were made. Huge sums were fraudulently charged to many credit cards in order to acquire an armory that would rival that of a National Guard unit's; ammunition in an unbelievable quantity was acquired; paramilitary uniforms and gear were purchased and created by Davidian seamstresses; firearms training and fortification of the Compound took place; the leader preached sermons to motivate his "army"; and finally preparations for the ambush of February 28 were completed.

The judge entirely adopted the government's scenario despite the jury's findings to the contrary. His characterization of the Davidians' beliefs is typical of the government's projection of what they wanted to find. Koresh did not preach that his followers must "bring about" a violent conflict with federal agents, but that the government would proceed against them and they must be prepared to defend themselves. The arms, camouflage suits, and shooting vests were primarily the Davidians' commercial stock in trade, which they sold at gun shows for profit. Of course, when they found themselves embattled, those came in handy for guard duty, but they were not a sacred uniform for Holy War.

In sentencing, the judge turned the import of his jury instructions upside down. He had told the jury that they could not convict on Count Three (use of firearms) unless they had found a defendant guilty under Count One (conspiracy to murder). The jury made a mistake and convicted seven defendants on Count Three, but not on Count One. The judge then

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concluded that the jury had found a conspiracy after all, and "bootstrapped" Count One onto the lesser Count Three, holding that by convicting the defendants of the latter it had really convicted them of the former. Then he threw the book at them.

By reinstating convictions on the third count, the court brought on draconian sentencing requirements. To "use or carry" a firearm in the commission of a violent crime invokes a mandatory sentence in addition to the sentence imposed for the crime itself. "Use" and "carry," it turns out, do not mean in current law what they might mean in commom usage. The courts have held that a defendant can "use" a firearm without firing, brandishing, or displaying it. In one case a person was found guilty of this offense when the firearm was located "in a zippered bag in a second-floor closet." Beyond that, courts have applied a "fortress" theory when firearms are found "readily available in strategic locations" on the premises, and any defendants also on the premises at the time can be convicted of using and carrying. The judge found that Mt. Carmel was "not only a figurative but a literal fortress, manned by each of the Defendants convicted on this count."

If the firearm is legal, the additional sentence is five years. If it is an illegally "enhanced" weapon, the sentence is enhanced to thirty years. In response to defense attornies' contentions that the determination of whether the weapons involved were enhanced was a matter of fact to be determined by the jury, the court disagreed, announcing that "the type of weapon is not an element of the offense." What the jury was to determine was the *mens rea* or "guilty mind" of the defendant, not the means used to carry out the intended offense. On the basis of this reasoning, the judge felt free to conclude that all convicted of Count Three had access to enhanced weapons. But he expressed exasperation with the recently adopted mandatory sentencing guidelines (which, though overruled on appeal, he had found unconstitutional in an earlier case).

> In an earlier era, before the surge of crime in this country caused Congress to attempt to micro-manage sentences handed down by federal courts, judges could actually weigh relative culpability and exercise discretion in formulating appropriate sentences. Such is not now the case. Based on this Court's review and analysis of all available authorities, it is determined that thirty-year sentences as to all Defendants convicted of Count Three is mandatory.

That conclusion added thirty years to the ten years for voluntary manslaughter for five of the defendants:

> Renos Avraam: 40 years, plus fine of $10,000;
> Brad Branch: 40 years, plus fine of $2,000;
> Jaime Castille: 40 years, plus fine of $2,000;
> Livingston Fagan: 40 years, plus fine of $5,000;
> Kevin Whitecliff: 40 years, plus fine of $2,000.

Paul Fatta, found guilty of two firearms offenses, was sentenced to five years on one and ten years on the other, to run consecutively, plus a fine of $25,000 on each. The judge said he would recommend incarceration in Nevada near where Mr. Fatta's son, Kalani, was living, as requested by his attorney.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite his protestations about lack of discretion, the judge "departed downward" from the sentencing guidelines with respect to two defendants convicted on Count Three. Because of Graeme Craddock's forthcoming responses to the Rangers and the Grand Jury, he was given a sentence of ten years for voluntary manslaughter and ten years for Count Three, a total of twenty years, plus a fine of $2,000. Ruth Riddle was also given a reduced sentence. The judge commented, "One would have to have been as closely involved with this tragedy from its first day until today, as I have been, and to have observed Ms. Riddle's demeanor and reactions throughout all of these proceedings, compared to all of the other Defendants, to fully understand all of the reasons I believe her culpability is so much less than most of theirs. Therefore . . . the Court will depart downward in this case and sentence Ms. Riddle to a period of thirty—excuse me—five years incarceration . . . [and] a $2,500 fine." The sentencing guidelines were apparently not so rigid that they could not be reduced by twenty-five years for a defendant whose "demeanor" seemed acceptable to the judge. (Katherine Schroeder, who testified for the government, received a sentence of three years.) Appeals are being taken to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans by most of the convicted defendants.

IX

The person chosen by the jury as its presiding member was Sara L. Bain, a San Antonio schoolteacher. On May 11, 1994, after hearing of the reinstatement of Count Three, she wrote the judge that the jury had not intended to convict the defendants on serious gun charges. "Even five years is too severe a penalty for what we believed to be a minor charge," she wrote. (The judge said he had never received her letter, that the jury is not to concern itself with sentences, and that jurors cannot impeach their own verdict.) She attended the sentencing hearing as a silent reminder to the judge of the jury's concerns, but without apparently affecting the draconian thirty-year sentences.

In an interview on June 24, 1994, she said about the sentences: "They certainly didn't reflect the jury's intention at all. We had thought that the weapons charges would be a slap on the wrist. . . . I wish every-

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one had just been acquitted on all charges. . . . The federal government was absolutely out of control there. We spoke in the jury room about the fact that the wrong people were on trial, that it should have been the ones that planned the raid and orchestrated it and insisted on carrying out this plan who should have been on trial."

The prosecutors and the judge repeatedly insisted that "the government is not on trial here." Sara Bain and other jurors evidently thought it should have been. That may yet occur. A number of civil suits have been brought against the federal agencies and officers involved. The leading lawsuit is probably that entered in August 1994 by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark on behalf of "the surviving members of the General Association of the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists" for $900,000,000 for wrongful death, property damage, and other harms. If the case goes forward, a prolonged period of discovery will follow, which could produce some very interesting evidence, including the videotapes and still photos taken by the ATF photographers during the raid, the plans for the raid, the FBI's plans for use of CS gas, the logs of observers during the gassing and the fire, and other information that was not admitted at the criminal trial.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, stated on January 14, 1995 that Congress will hold hearings this year into the deaths at Waco. Whether such hearings will contribute to truth and justice may be a different question. They may just muddy the waters and impair the civil suits. But they should at least keep the pot boiling. There is much about the disaster at Mt. Carmel that has not yet come out, and the public still thinks about it in terms of "cult" stereotypes that ill prepare us for future encounters with those who believe they are touched by the finger of God.

X

There is a $60,000 cyclone fence around the premises in Waco, erected by the State of Texas, to which the surviving Branch Davidians have the key. They own the property, but a woman claiming to be the wife of George Roden has built a shack outside the entrance and lives there, trying to collect donations "for the Branch Davidians" from the dozens of tourists who come by every week (which the Branch Davidians never receive).

The survivors are indigent, having lost everything in the fire. But Sheila Martin, the widow of Wayne Martin, told me that they are sustained by their reliance on the Bible, not on David Koresh. He taught them, she said, to rely on the Word, not on him. But one elderly lady said she was just waiting for him to come and take her home. FT

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The Strange Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe

Philip Zaleski

Two or three years ago, the first cold winds of middle age came knocking at my door. My muscles ached after an hour of softball and my mind turned to mush by ten o'clock every night. But I resolved to fight back. The decision is commonplace enough; we all know graying men who seek the fountain of youth with hot-air balloons or low-slung sportscars. I chose a more moderate and productive course. I snuggled down with a cup of hot chocolate, a woolen blanket, and a plan: to reread the beloved classics of children's literature. Whether this was a coward's flight from the hard facts of aging or a heroic attempt to keep my youth intact, I still do not know. I do know that it was magic.

When I opened the first slender volume, the doors of memory flew open as well. I hurtled back a quarter of a century and became again a boy with a book on a long summer afternoon, ready to tumble, like Alice, into a wonderland of words. Time-travel, I discovered, is indeed a reality; how grand that it is reserved for older folks. I found, too, that the pleasure of rereading was more than that of stepping into the past; it was the thrill of meeting a past illuminated by the present, of bringing to these cherished children's books an adult's appreciation of irony, wit, characterization, and plot. I read with two sets of eyes at once, that of youth and that of maturity, and my vision was never so keen.

So one joy tumbled after another, until I came to the oldest classic of them all, Daniel Defoe's 1719 work of high adventure and humble religiosity, *Robinson Crusoe*. As a scholar, I knew the importance of *Robinson Crusoe*. The tale is so famous that Robinson is often taken to be a real man who suffered a real shipwreck, a mix-up of fiction and fact bestowed upon only one other literary protagonist, Sherlock Holmes. That *Robinson Crusoe* exists at all is a miracle. Few could have predicted such a masterpiece of good feeling and fortitude from a man described by Jonathan Swift as a "grave, sententious, dogmatical rogue." The miracle is compounded when one learns that Defoe, who made his living as a journalist, churned out seven other books the same year he fathered Robinson. But somehow the most famous survivor in history was born, and his popularity was instant and undying. A count taken in 1979 found 1,198 editions in English alone (the number has increased since then), plus translations into innumerable tongues. There is even an 1820 Latin version for schoolboys, *Robinson Crusoeus*.

For my return to Robinson's island, I chose the Norton Critical Edition. I picked it up eagerly, anticipating what my memory assured me was a streamlined adventure tale, far from the ambiguities and complications of the adult world. What could be simpler, after all, than shipwreck and survival? The book seemed curiously weighty in my hands, thicker than I remembered; thicker in style, too. Well, I thought, perhaps I read an abridged version as a child; they must have simplified the language. No matter. Abridgements, when done with care, generally retain the gist of the original, although they necessarily deflate the art. And after all, how could one mangle an adventure book? One episode of derring-do more or less should make no difference, I reasoned.

The first sentence of *Robinson* reassured me, despite its cumbersome length: "I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. . . ." This at least was familiar territory. I sighed with pleasure and settled into my armchair. As the plot unfolded, however, I began to wonder. I did not remember Robinson being quite so obstreperous, or his early life such an

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unbounded misery on land and sea, such a jagged sequence of poverty, imprisonment, even a shipwreck that presages the more famous one. The mystery was compounded when I discovered—still in the first thirty pages—that Robinson had been a slaver. Well, I argued, the abridgers had left this out to protect tender sensibilities.

But soon I realized that something was terribly amiss. It was not only Robinson's character that was different, but the very significance of his shipwreck, the very meaning of his life. What I discovered in the unabridged *Robinson* clashed, in every important point of substance and style, with the abridged *Robinson* of my memory. Moreover, what seemed to be missing from my childhood version—what loomed before me in Defoe's original text—was hardly material one would wish to hide from children. On the contrary, the most savage cuts—those that tore the heart out of the novel—had removed just those passages that I would have thought any parent would most want his child to read.

Perhaps, you think, I fuss over nothing. What does it matter if I once read a bad abridgment? But there is far more to it than that. Before I demonstrate exactly what I stumbled upon and why it matters so much, let us refresh our memories of *Robinson*. We will then be able to judge whether my experience is unique or whether it exposes a grave truth about our culture.

Just about everyone, reader or not, can recite the highlights of Robinson's adventures: A man is shipwrecked without resources on a desert island, survives for years by his own wits, undergoes immeasurable anguish as a result of his isolation, discovers a footprint in the sand that belongs to Friday, and is finally rescued from his exile. Such is our common store of Robinsoniana, to which 99 out of 100 people will agree.

All of it is wrong.

Robinson's island is not a desert in our modern sense of the word, he does not proceed without resources, he does not live solely by his wits, he does not suffer inordinately for his solitude, and that famous footprint—the best known in the world—does not belong to Friday. Even the word "rescue," for Robinson's eventual escape from the island, is false. But more significant than any of these details is that our overall perception of *Robinson Crusoe* is wrong. The single most important fact about this boy's adventure book is that it is not a boy's adventure book at all. It is, rather, a grown-up tale of a man's discovery of himself, civilization, and God.

II

As Defoe's book begins, Robinson Crusoe of York commits what he calls his "Original Sin"—he spurns his father's advice to join the family business and instead heads out to sea. Robinson is self-willed, arrogant, and hungry for exploits. Catastrophes ensue—storms, shipwrecks, and slavery—but the lad continues in his follies. "I was," he confesses, "to be the willful Agent of all my own Miseries."

Then providence gives him a second chance, shipwrecking him on an Atlantic island, whose features roughly match those of the Juan Fernandez group in the Pacific Ocean where Robinson's real-life prototype, Alexander Selkirk, passed seven years in solitude. Robinson's island is a pristine land of surpassing beauty. To its forlorn first inhabitant, it seems nothing short of Eden: "The Country appear'd so fresh, so green, so flourishing, every thing being in a constant Verdure, or Flourish of Spring, that it looked like a planted Garden."

In this paradise Robinson builds a new home—without Eve, alas; such is his penance. He also builds a new self, in the Pauline sense: "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Robinson no longer follows his own will, but bows before the will of God. He learns to see in his calamities "the Work of Providence," and to discern the hand of God at every moment of his life. He opens his Bible and repents, calling out, "Lord, be my help!"

This conversion does not go unrequited; as Robinson surrenders to God, the island surrenders to him. Step by step, he recapitulates in miniature the rise of civilization. He handles a tool for the first time and builds himself a chair and table. He needs a shovel, so he makes one, although "never was a shovel . . . so long a-making." He hammers a wall, plants a field, keeps a herd of goats. As his conversion deepens, so does his fortune. He builds a second establishment deep inland, and admits that "I fancy'd now I had my Country-House, and my Sea-Coast House." He declares himself "Lord of all this country . . . as compleatly as any Lord of a Manor in England."

All this can be shrugged off as a crude example of Protestant work ethic: sweat enough and your lot will increase. But this flip analysis ignores the crucial issue and the book's great gift: Defoe's account of how a civilization is born. What transforms chaos into cosmos, survivalism into society, is obedience to God. "I acquiesced in the Dispositions of Providence, which I began now to own, and to believe, ord'd every Thing for the best," Robinson says. So profound is his transformation that he comes to thank God for his dolorous shipwreck: "I began sensibly to feel how much more happy this life was, with all its miserable Circumstances, than the wicked, cursed, abominable Life I led all the past Part of my Days." Through God's mercy, Robinson's life is spared, his soul cleansed, and civilization born.

When Friday appears, the process repeats itself. Robinson names Friday, clothes him, arms him,

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teaches him to make fire and bake bread, gives him the keys to the treasury of Western history, science, and religion. Those who read this as imperialist fantasy miss the point: through his newfound wisdom, Robinson is able to share with others the good harvest he has reaped. He saves Friday's father and a Spaniard from cannibals, and becomes a king: "I thought myself very rich in subjects. . . . I was absolute Lord and lawgiver; they all owed their Lives to me." Robinson's life comes full circle when he rescues a boatload of Englishmen; the grateful mariners see in their deliverer not a Job afflicted by God's cruel whims, but a divine messenger: "He must be sent directly from heaven," says one, echoing what the Maltese said about St. Paul, another victim of shipwreck, to which Robinson replies with the humility of the truly converted, "All Help is from Heaven." Defoe's story achieves its ironic end as Robinson, now an agent of God's providence, maroons a shipload of pirates and returns to Europe a wealthy man, respected for his kindness and generosity.

Robinson Crusoe is, then, nothing less than a textbook in the appropriate relationships amongst human being, culture, and God. It might fairly be retitled, *Civilization and Its Contents.* The lessons couldn't be more clear: Welfare and worship are inseparable; both the well-ordered state and the well-ordered individual rest squarely upon the divine. Every component of civilization—shelter, handicraft, agriculture, and animal husbandry no less than law, art, and worship—ultimately depends upon a vigorous relationship with God; "In God We Trust" would sit well on Robinson's coins.

This is not an eccentric reading of the text: *Robinson Crusoe*'s spiritual depths are evident to all who read it unabridged. Whenever I include it on a syllabus, my students are thunderstruck by the power of Robinson's conversion; I suspect it leads one or two readers to their own fruitful self-examination. In just this way—as manual of conversion and guide to the good life—was *Robinson* understood for centuries. A typical assessment comes from George Chalmers, author of a 1790 biography of Defoe: "Few books have ever so naturally mingled amusement with instruction. The attention is fixed, either by the simplicity of the narration, or by the variety of the incidents; the heart is amended by a *vindication of the ways of God to man.*" In Wilkie Collin's *The Moonstone,* the kindly butler Mr. Betteridge delivers an even more enthusiastic appraisal:

> Such a book as *Robinson Crusoe* never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years—generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco—and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad—*Robinson Crusoe.* When I want advice—*Robinson Crusoe.* In past times, when my wife plagued me; in present times, when I have had a drop too much—*Robinson Crusoe.* I have worn out six stout *Robinson Crusoes* with hard work in my service. On my lady's last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and *Robinson Crusoe* set me right again.

It's a good thing, I thought, that Mr. Betteridge did not rely for counsel on the version I read as a child. He would have searched in vain for the favorite passages that uplifted his soul. My childhood version was a most curious case of bowdlerization, in which the scissors snipped away at something other than scatological language or gore or sizzling sex. The truth was much more startling: *all the religion had been excised.* Again and again, one particular word had been removed, along with every scene inspired by that word.

What was this three-letter obscenity too dangerous for the eyes of children? The word was "God."

But surely, I thought, this cannot be. Perhaps in my youth I had read an outlaw edition, the joke of some madcap Nietzschean who took it literally that God was dead. I rushed to my local library—a well-stocked collection in a college town—and scooped up every copy of *Robinson Crusoe* on the shelves. Almost all of them proved to be abridgments. Every single one showed the same bleak pattern, the evisceration from the text of almost every scrap or shred of religion.

Let us consider a typical example, a "Doubleday Classics" edition called simply *Robinson Crusoe.* The book bears no date, but the illustrations are copyrighted 1945; perhaps this is the same version I read as a boy. The frontispiece offers a delightful drawing of Robinson, umbrella in hand as if out for a stroll on Brighton Beach, discovering the footprint in the sand. Anyone picking up this edition would assume it to be the genuine article, especially as there is no mention of abridgment on the title page or anywhere else. However, this is *Robinson Crusoe* after a visit from the thought police. Witness, for example, our hero's journal, kept at the beginning of his exile when he still had ink. The entries for June 27 through July 4, 1660—stretching for over three thousand words by my rough count—contain some of Robinson's most exalted religious writing, as he nearly succumbs to a terrible fever and utters "the first Prayer, if I may call it so, that I had made for many Years." As the illness abates Robinson reads the Bible:

> I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, *Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!*

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> This was the first time that I could say, in the true Sense of the words, that I pray'd in all my Life; for now I pray'd with a Sense of my condition, and with a true Scripture View of Hope founded on the encouragement of Word of God; and from this Time, I may say, I began to have Hope that God would hear me.

God did hear Robinson, but readers of this Doubleday edition certainly won't, for the passage quoted above—in many ways the core of the book—has been completely removed. Moreover, Defoe's three-thousand-word account of Robinson's soul-wrestlings has been sliced in half, and—as you might expect by now—all references to Christ have been erased.

Yet this example is far from the worst of the lot. Let us turn now to the truly mind-boggling *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1977), a version that at least admits what it is about, declaring itself as "adapted." Here any hint of divine providence is simply chopped away wholesale, as if removing a cancer. That pesky word "God," which appears hundreds of times in Defoe's original text, remains in only ten places, usually in conventional phrases ("For God's sake, Smith, throw down your arms"). Not a hint of Robinson's conversion remains.

Well, I assured myself, as inexcusable as these cuts may be, at least they haven't been inflicted upon adults. Then it dawned upon me that most adults draw their knowledge of *Robinson* from abridged versions scanned in childhood. Moreover, for a refresher course, most adults would turn not to Defoe's unabridged original, but rather to the movies. Perhaps here there was hope. I rushed down to the local video store, where I discovered that only one version is readily obtainable: *Crusoe* (1989), starring Aidan Quinn. Surely in an R-rated film, I thought, there might be a little room for God. But I had forgotten Hollywood's knack for rewriting history. Sure enough, every sign of Robinson's conversion had been removed. *Crusoe*, in fact, manages the neat feat of completely reversing Defoe's intent, transforming *Robinson* into an antireligious tract in which our hero utters but one prayer, a desperate plea to God to spare the life of his dog. The prayer goes unanswered (unspoken premise: no God exists to answer the prayer). The film also inverts Robinson's tutelage of Friday: the native learns no English but the Englishman goes native, dropping his table manners if not his aitches, and learning to worship sun and sand.

But at least in *Crusoe* our hapless Englishman does not apply for membership in Friday's cannibal tribe. This weird turn of events is reserved for the mercifully hard-to-obtain 1975 *Man Friday*, starring Peter O'Toole as Robinson, with Richard Roundtree in the title role. Here orthodox religion is not ignored as in *Crusoe*, but rather mocked without mercy. Robinson proves to be a fool, God a prude, Christian faith a sign of mental illness. The voice of reason, warmth, and love belongs to Friday. At least in this respect *Man Friday* conforms to Defoe's intent, for in the original, Friday is indeed a kind and perceptive man. But just when writer Adrian Mitchell seems to have gotten something right, it blows up in his face; for *Man Friday* presents a Friday who has hung out too long at Woodstock. His tribe has more in common with the Hog Farm or Summerhill than with any real preindustrial society. It is a blissful communal family, free of such Western hangups as ambition or competition, and practices free love—polymorphously perverse, of course. The tribe's religion, too, has burst free of the chains of orthodoxy, offering instead, as Friday explains, the apotheosis of be-your-own-best-friend:

> Worship any way you like as long as you mean it. God won't mind. To yourself you are not yet God. I do not think you worship yourself as you should. But still you are God, whether you know it or not.

In the end, Robinson is summarily dispatched back to his lonely island, to brood in solitude over his Bible and its joyless legacy.

Hollywood's fascination with *Robinson Crusoe* continues apace: a big-budget version, starring Pierce Brosnan—the new James Bond—is now in production. Will 007 kneel in the muck, begging God for deliverance? Maybe so; Hollywood likes on occasion to throw a sop to special interest groups. But it's a sure bet that the full story of Robinson's conversion will be left on the cutting-room floor.

III

It is not difficult to see in the strange saga of *Robinson Crusoe* a parable of our own condition. We are all Robinsons, cut off from the mainland of religious tradition, shipwrecked on the shoals of secularism. Our culture as a whole has suffered the same fate as Defoe's book; a systematic purgation of religious content. In thus assaying our lot, it is essential that we avoid seeing conspirators behind every gunwale; our fingers can point only at ourselves. At no time, I am convinced, was there a deliberate suppression of *Robinson*'s religion in order to buttress secular claims. Culture does not evolve—or collapse—so consciously. Revisionist editors and revisionist filmmakers work in good faith, but they work within a culture that is suffocating for lack of connection with traditional faith. This suffocation has brought with it its own form of amnesia or cultural brain damage. Few artists and critics even remember that people once worshipped a God who gave ultimate meaning to civilization's great creations, from law to literature, as He did for Robinson's meaner crafts. Intended or not, the results have been devastating. As

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anyone who spends much time dealing with intellectual history knows, truth seems to be slipping from our grasp; we are in danger of fabricating a past—and not only in English literature—to suit our present biases.

Our contemporary allergy to the sacred, and our related inability to read history with any rigor, is thrown into sharp relief when we look at the critical interpretations of *Robinson* bandied about in recent years. "Today we no longer read the story as a . . . religious parable, but recognize it as . . . an allegory of the human condition," announces J. R. Hammond in *A Defoe Companion* (1993), taking for granted a divorce between religion and "the human condition." Still more supercilious is Martin Green's 1990 appraisal of a 1955 compilation of Methodist sermons entitled *The Gospel of Robinson Crusoe* that reads Defoe's tale for what it is, a story of spiritual travail. This book, says Green, was "simply out of date. It was a mere oddity. Any audience it may have had in 1955 must have belonged to a special group, out of step with the majority." Such, Green assures, us, is the consensus of "men and women of letters."

Who, then, is Robinson, to those who thus ignore the text? A Marxist hero, for one: in 1933, the Soviet Writers circle declared Defoe, along with Jules Verne and Jonathan Swift, as one of the three great foreign novelists of the Cause. Presumably Stalinists took their cue from Marx, who declared of Robinson in *Das Kapital*: "Of his prayers and the like we take no account." Marx instead upheld Robinson as the representative of "a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common." Rousseau, by contrast, imagined Robinson as a prototype of the noble savage. Other critics have seen in Defoe's book a parable about imperialism or social progress or oedipal conflicts. But the truth is that reading *Robinson* as a lesson in economics or psychology or pedagogy is akin to reading *Moby Dick* for its tips on spermaceti harvesting.

IV

The question remains, Why does it matter? Why care about distortions of *Robinson*?

It matters first of all because truth matters. And it matters secondly because *Robinson Crusoe* matters. *Robinson* matters in its own right, as a splendid novel that deserves to remain intact; and *Robinson* matters in the history of the novel. Many critics count Defoe's masterpiece as not just the most famous novel in the world, but the first novel in the world. This judgment depends on definition, of course, and a powerful argument can be mounted to push the genre back to *Don Quixote*, if not all the way to *The Golden Ass*. Nonetheless, all agree that *Robinson Crusoe* stands as a primordial example of the form. It is also, unquestionably, the first English novel, progenitor of a glorious stream whose great current encompasses Fielding and Dickens, Grahame and Lewis. As Leslie Stephens put it, Defoe did "discover a new art"—even if others had discovered it before him.

Admittedly, the art is rough; perhaps it always is, when a new form is whelped. Defoe forever jumbles facts, for instance having his hermit swim buck naked out to the shipwreck and then stuff his pockets with salvaged goodies. The text is long-winded, repetitious, sometimes frightfully crude. Defoe handles emotion poorly; as Dickens pointed out, *Robinson* "is the only example of a universally popular book that can make no one laugh and no one cry." Its structure sags: Poe remarked that "we close the book and are quite satisfied that we could have written as well ourselves." Yet *Robinson Crusoe* shines with power and beauty: power that stems from the universality of its hero's plight, so elemental that it approaches myth; beauty that lies in the majesty of his redemption. As if conscious of his role as father of the novel, Defoe bequeathed us at the very origin of the genre a work that addresses the origin and destiny of human beings, of justice, freedom, and the state, of civilization itself; and he locates the source of these essential matters just where they must be found, in the very origin of all things.

Thirdly, our discussion matters because the novel itself matters. Although no longer the most popular narrative form (for who goes through more novels than movies in a year?), the novel remains first when it comes to intellectual clout (for who would prefer an Oscar to the Nobel Prize in Literature?). Moreover, the novel is the art of the public square par excellence. By the very nature of its production and distribution the novel cannot be privatized, as can, say, painting, which made a disastrous swerve towards subjectivity after World War I and in consequence is no longer a subject of serious public discourse. Nor can the novel's subject matter be successfully privatized, as failed avant-garde experiments by Anaïs Nin and others have proven. True, the recent history of the novel shines with its own sickly decadence; one need only think of the efforts of French writers such as Natalie Sarraute or Alain Robbe-Grillet to deify style by exchanging moral or psychological depth for a richly patterned surface. But few people read these novels and fewer remember them. The fact remains that good novels (I mean novels as varied as *The Brothers Karamazov, Pale Fire,* and *Silence*) invariably deal with relationships between people, or between people and God, and the moral implications of these relationships. Moreover, a novelist works alone (unlike an artist in theater or film); each novel is as individual—and as universal—as a prayer. Of all art forms, then, the novel—even when a tale of a solitary castaway—remains the essential aesthetic mediator between public and private realms.

Fourthly, our discussion matters because art mat-

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ters, and the messages that art embodies. It matters because beauty matters, and the truths to which beauty points. One litmus test of any society will always be its sense of beauty. What clearer or more precise commentary on contemporary aesthetics do we need than the recent controversy about Andres Serrano's image of Christ? This now-famous photograph cannot be rejected out of hand; in fact, it makes a perfect pivot for the debate about the role of art in society, for on first impression Serrano's photo is undeniably beautiful, a haunting portrait of the crucified Christ suspended in a mysterious golden-red cloud, whose bubbles and streaks remind us of remote galaxies, ancient suns. But of course the photography has a title, and it comes like a slap in the face: *Piss Christ*. That this crucifix sits in urine is more than incidental; it forms the core of Serrano's art.

Most viewers react to this photograph with howls of outrage. And properly so, for we perceive in it an indiscriminate mixing of the sacred and the profane (a confusion to which the post-conversion Robinson never falls prey; he always offers his earthly labors in service to God). We should not be surprised that Serrano's photograph has the power to shock, for even in a secular age we instinctively recoil in the presence of sacrilege. Nor should we wonder that Serrano aims to shock, for such is the stock-in-trade of much contemporary art.

But real beauty is more than compelling sensory impressions (the immediate photograph), even when charged with intellectual electricity (the potent complex of associations surrounding crucifix and urine). Real beauty is also a matter of rightness. Real beauty always unfolds in a moral landscape; it reflects in its order, intelligence, and harmonious dispositions these same qualities in their transcendent state. Real beauty never divides, degrades, or corrupts. Rather it weds, elevates, and purifies. Such beauty always leads to God, for "God is beautiful and he loves beauty," as the Islamic *hadith* has it. "Beauty summons all things to itself," as Dionysius the Areopagite observes.

To put it succinctly, real beauty converts. Once conversion takes place—as Defoe shows so clearly in *Robinson Crusoe*—the human being expresses his love for the divine order through the beauty of his own creations, be they symphonies or straw baskets. In this enterprise, at its best, we draw near to God's mysterious workings. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, "To the extent that it is inspired by truth and love of being, art bears a certain likeness to God's activity in what he has created." Witness the beauty of Shaker furniture; here we see what results when craft (the high art of all castaways and of all societies that have not abolished the sacred) is informed on every level of conception and execution by traditional spiritual understanding.

Finally, distortions of *Robinson* matter because culture matters. To grasp why, we must first recognize that secularism has muddled the relationship between religion and culture. My desktop dictionary, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, defines culture as "the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population." But are beliefs nothing more than a "product of human work and thought"? Not so, not entirely, not for those who admit the possibility of divine revelation. Here culture confesses what God expresses; culture is the medium through which we hear the muffled voice of God. For just this reason, dogmatic truths find different expression in different cultures. For just this reason as well, religion without culture is dead. According to Christopher Dawson, "A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture." The reverse also holds. Without culture, religion will not long survive; thus it was in the cultural oases of Benedictine monasteries that the Christian faith of Europe withstood the barbarian centuries.

These days, culture forms the battleground between the sacred and the profane. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II makes the canny observation that "the struggle for the soul of the contemporary world is at its height where the spirit of this world seems strongest. In this sense the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* speaks of *modern Areopagi*. Today these *Areopagi* are the worlds of science, culture, and media; these are the worlds of writers and artists, the worlds where the intellectual elite is formed." Political activity has its role to play; but we can pass all the laws we want, and they will do no good if our culture remains marooned on secular seas. For those of us who are writers, artists, and intellectuals, culture is the ark. There can be no other. Culture (philosophy, art, social activity) has carried us into the modern debacle; culture must bring us out as well.

Some men and women heal their cultural wounds with radical surgery. They cut off from the larger social mass and establish their own insular subcultures, alive to the presence of God: the Amish, the Hutterites, the Shakers come to mind. Such an enterprise daunts the majority of human beings, for reasons both practical and moral. Those of us committed to the larger society, however, have good reason to hope. Transformations now underway hold, I believe, strong possibilities for the renewal of a genuinely spiritual culture. There are signs that people have woken up to their loss. Baby-boomers who abandoned the churches twenty years ago have streamed back to the pews; Gregorian chant floods the airwaves—an event inconceivable fifteen years ago.

Popular media, too, display everywhere the cracks

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and fissures of religion erupting after long suppression. At this very moment, more angels cluster on the *New York Times* best-seller list than on the head of any medieval pin. Science fiction in particular has kept alive the eschatological imagination in a skeptical age, albeit in camouflaged form: Stephen Spielberg's ET is a transparent Christ figure, and his return to his spaceship a blatant technological Ascension. In fantasy fiction, dragons are on the rebound. Can St. George be far behind? Even New Age spirituality, anathema to traditionalists, can be read as a welcome respite from the relentless secularism of the age.

The unhappy truth is that rejection of orthodoxy has become a nearly inevitable phase in adolescent development; the happy sequel is that many people work their way back to church or synagogue through excursions into the New Age or other "alternative" religions. After all, how long can one dally with pastel-and-pink Aquarian cherubim before longing for an encounter with Gabriel's stately beauty? How long can one read ersatz "channeled" scriptures before finding relief in the Bible or the Koran? Everyone hungers for real spiritual food; it is our job to make it available.

Where do we begin? Does *Robinson Crusoe* point the way? As a start, we might whisk all secular critics to a remote island where we could see how long they prattle on about "economic man" before dropping to their knees to pray God for deliverance. And at that point, of course, we would request an essay on the true meaning of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Fantasies aside, however, *Robinson* does offer at least the metaphorical outlines of a program to resolve the current crisis. First, we must retain whatever is worthy in our shipwrecked culture. We must turn to tradition for guidance, as Robinson turned to the remnants of Christian England strewn along his beach. At the same time, we must abandon any thought of returning wholesale to the past. Luddites, monarchists, and theocrats—all of whom ply their trade today in arenas as varied as Green politics and Islamic fundamentalism—offer only a different kind of shipwreck. We must acknowledge the enormity of our task; for when before has a secular culture rebuilt itself on sacred foundations? We need solutions as ingenious as any devised by our industrious hero. Like Robinson, we must never despair; like Robinson, we must find strength in prayer. It helps to bear in mind that it is we who have uprooted God from our homes, schools, books, arts; we have cast ourselves adrift. God, the master mariner, never abandons his children. We do well to remember, too, that Robinson found salvation in a plight more desperate than ours. Then, perhaps, we can relish the truth in Walter de la Mare's heartfelt remark about Defoe's finest creation: "Even to *think* of his admirable hermit is to be cheerful and to take heart of grace." FT

Stick Figure, Mogadishu

It is almost as if another child
drew this one
crayon-thin
with legs run out of running

then garnished each arm with a
fan
looped two eyes
shirt shoes forgotten

the usual childhood landscape full
of light-bulb trees
sun as tinkertoy
tulips in cherry
blades of grass thick as green
beans
all traded for nothing

the mouth erased
a whole world in the belly.

Barbara Seaman

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Preaching As Though We Had Enemies

Stanley Hauerwas

I am just postmodern enough not to trust "postmodern" as a description of our times, for it privileges the practices and intellectual formations of modernity. Calling this a postmodern age reproduces the modernist assumption that history must be policed by periods. Just as modernity created the "middle ages," which we all then knew could be safely left behind, "postmodern" is far too comforting since it gives the illusion that we know where we are—in contradiction to the postmodernist's epistemological doubt that such knowledge is available.

Modernity was created by a deliberate rejection of the past, but ironically modernity is now our past. Accordingly, as J. Bottum puts it ("Christians and Posmoderns," FT, February 1994), "postmodernity is still in the line of modernity, as rebellion against rebellion is still rebellion, as an attack on the constraints of grammar must still be written in grammatical sentences, as a skeptical argument against the structures of rationality must still be put rationally." Or as Reinhard Hutter observes, "It belongs to the ironies of modernity that exactly those who are most modern increasingly claim postmodernity as modernity's most recent advance."

I confess I take perverse delight as a theologian in the controversies surrounding postmodernism. Modernity sought to secure knowledge in the structure of human rationality, and relegated God to the "gaps" or denied Him all together. Modernity said that God is a projection of the ideals and wants of what it means to be human so let us serve and worship the only God that matters—that is, the human. Postmodernists, in the quest to be thorough in their atheism, now deny that the human exists. Postmodernists are thus the atheists that only modernity could produce.

I do find it puzzling, however, to watch theologians, both conservative and liberal, come to the defense of the human, the rational, objectivity, the "text," "moral values," science, and all the other conceits the modern university cherishes in the name of "humanism." It is as though Christians have forgotten that we also have a stake in atheism. Christians do not believe in the "human"; we believe in God—a God we believe, moreover, who intends to kill us all in the end. So we Christians do not oppose nuclear weapons because they threaten to destroy "mother earth," but because the God we serve would not have one life unjustly taken even if such a killing would insure the survival of the human species. Indeed, it is not even clear that we Christians know what the human species is or what status it may have since we have surer knowledge that we are creatures than that we are human.

Christians, therefore, have little stake in the question of whether we live in a postmodern time. For us, any divide in history, the way we tell the story of how we have come to the place where we are, requires a reading of God's providential care of God's creation through the people of Israel and the Church. Israel and the Church are not characters in a larger story called "world," but rather "world" is a character in God's story as known through the story that Israel is the Church. Without them there is no world to have a story. From my perspective, "postmodernism" merely names an interesting set of developments in the social order that is based on the presumption that God does not matter.

The imperialistic character of these claims for the significance of the Church does not mean that it is unimportant for Christians to understand the peculiar development called modernity. Rather, as I just suggested, we must narrate the modern story on our

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terms. That, I fear, is what we have not done in modernity. Christians' attitudes toward modernity have primarily been characterized by a sense of inferiority. As John Milbank observes, "The pathos of modern theology is its false humility." Our preaching and theology has been one ceaseless effort to conform to the canons of intelligibility produced by the economic and intellectual formations characteristic of modern and liberal societies.

Christians in modernity thought their task was to make the Gospel intelligible to the world rather than to help the world understand why it could not be intelligible without the Gospel. Desiring to become part of the modernist project, preachers and theologians accepted the presumption that Christianity is a set of beliefs, a "worldview," designed to give meaning to our lives. In the name of being politically responsible in, to, and for liberal social orders, the politics of Christian discourse was relegated to the private realm. We accepted the politics of translation believing that neither we nor our non-Christian and half-Christian neighbors could be expected to submit to the discipline of Christian speech.

Ironically, the attempt to make Christianity intelligible often sought support from those philosophical and literary theories that attempted to protect discourse from translation—the most prominent example being New Criticism. Under the influence of New Criticism, some thought that Christianity could be conceived as a beautiful poem that is its own justification. Such a poem, of course, could and should illumine the human condition, but exactly because the poem provided such illumination, all attempts to make the poem "do something" must be condemned as crass. Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, in quite different ways, gave theological warrant to the high humanism intrinsic to the powerful set of suggestions associated with such formalist theories. What could be more comforting to modern consciousness than to discover that "ultimate concern" and "sin" are essential and unavoidable characteristics of the human condition? You do not even need to go to church to learn that. Reading Shakespeare will do just as well if not better.

The humanistic presumptions of New Criticism nicely fit the aestheticism of the middle class that dominates Christianity in America—at least the Christianity that produces intellectuals like us. That is why I take it that contemporary preaching is still dominated by formalist presumptions even if preachers think they have theoretically left such theories behind. New critical habits are hard habits to break because they fit so well the class interests that dominate the seminary cultures in which many of us are located.

In particular, new critical assumptions hide from us how our theological presumptions are shaped by class interests. Frank Lentricchia, in his *Modernist Quartet*, makes the fascinating suggestion that the modernist writer defined himself against the standards of the mass market by becoming the champion of radical originality and the maker of a "one-of-a-kind-text." He observes, however, that "the modernist desire in Frost and Eliot—to preserve an independent selfhood against the coercions of the market, a self made secure by the creation of a unique style—is subverted by the market, not because they wrote according to popular formulas, but because they give us their poems as delicious experiences of voyeurism, illusions of direct access to the life and thought of the famous writer, with the poet inside the poem like a rare animal in a zoo. This was the only commodity Frost and Eliot were capable of producing: the modernist phenomenon as product, mass culture's ultimate revenge on those who would scorn it."

In like manner, the preaching and theology shaped by new critical presumptions to illumine the human condition hid from us that the human condition we were illuminating was that of the bourgeoisie. That is why the sermon meant to illumine our condition, which is often eloquent and profound, is also so forgettable and even boring. Insights about the human condition are a dime a dozen. Most days most of us would rightly trade any insight for a good meal.

The high humanism of contemporary theology and preaching not only hid the class interest intrinsic to such preaching, but also reinforced the presumption that Christians could be Christians without enemies. Christianity, as the illumination of the human condition, is not a Christianity at war with the world. Liberal Christianity, of course, has enemies, but they are everyone's enemies—sexism, racism, homophobia. But liberal versions of Christianity, which can be both theologically and politically conservative, assume that what it means to be Christian qua Christian is to have no enemies peculiar to being Christian. Psalms such as Psalm 109, which ask God to destroy our enemies and their children, can appear only as embarrassing holdovers of "primitive" religious beliefs. Equally problematic are apocalyptic texts that suggest Christians have been made part of a cosmic struggle.

"Cosmic struggle" sounds like a video game that middle-class children play. Most of us do not go to church because we are seeking a safe haven from our enemies; we go to church to be assured we have no enemies. Accordingly, we expect our ministers to exemplify the same kind of bureaucratic mentality so characteristic of modern organizational behavior and politics. I sometimes think that there is a conspiracy afoot to make Alasdair MacIntyre's account of the manager in *After Virtue* empirically verifiable.

That the manager has become characteristic of liberal politics should not be surprising, but I continue to be taken aback by the preponderance of such char-

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acter types in the ministry. Of course, I should not be surprised that a soulless church produces a soulless ministry devoid of passion. The ministry seems captured in our time by people who are desperately afraid they might actually be caught with a conviction at some point in their ministry that might curtail future ambition. They, therefore, see their task to "manage" their congregations by specializing in the politics of agreement by always being agreeable. The preaching such a ministry produces is designed to reinforce our presumed agreements, since a "good church" is one without conflict. You cannot preach about abortion, suicide, or war because those are such controversial subjects—better to concentrate on "insights" since they do so little work for the actual shaping of our lives and occasion no conflict.

I confess one of the things I like about the Southern Baptists is that they have managed to have a fight in public. Fundamentalists at least believe they are supposed to have strong views, and they even believe they are supposed to act on their convictions. The problem with most of the mainstream churches is that we do not even know how to join an argument—better, we think, to create a committee to "study the issue."

If postmodernism means anything, it means that the comforting illusion of modernity that conflict is, can be, and should be avoided is over. No unbiased viewpoint exists that can in principle insure agreements. Our difficulty is not that we have conflicts, but that as modern people we have not had the courage to force the conflicts we ought to have had. Instead, we have comforted ourselves with the ideology of pluralism, forgetting that pluralism is the peace treaty left over from past wars that now benefits the victors of those wars.

One hopes that God is using this time to remind the Church that Christianity is unintelligible without enemies. Indeed, the whole point of Christianity is to produce the right kind of enemies. We have been beguiled by our established status to forget that to be a Christian is to be made part of an army against armies. It has been suggested that satisfaction theories of the Atonement and the correlative understanding of the Christian life as a life of interiority became the rule during the long process we call the Constantinian settlement. When Caesar becomes a member of the Church the enemy becomes internalized. The problem is no longer that the Church is seen as a threat to the political order, but that now my desires are disordered. The name for such an internalization in modernity is pietism and the theological expression of that practice is called Protestant liberalism.

In contrast, I am suggesting that our preaching should presume that we are preaching to a Church in the midst of a war—a position you may find odd to be advocated by a pacifist. I hope the oddness, however, might encourage you to reexamine your understanding of Christian nonviolence—which, if you are like me, was probably shaped by Reinhold Niebuhr. Who more than the Christian pacifist knows that Christians are in a war against war? Moreover, as a pacifist, I do not need something called the human condition illumined when I am preparing to face the enemy. Rather, I need to have a sense of where the battle is, what the stakes are, and what the long-term strategy might be. But that is exactly what most preaching does not do. It does not help us locate our enemy, because it does not believe that Christians should have enemies. In the name of love and peace, Christian preaching has reinforced the "normal nihilism" that grips our lives. We have a difficult time recognizing the wars that are already occurring or the wars that should be occurring because we think it so irrational that some should kill others in the name of "values."

James Edwards has argued in his *The Plain Sense of Things: The Fate of Religion in An Age of Values* that nothing characterizes the nihilism that grips our lives better than the language of "values." Nihilism is not a philosophical conspiracy designed by Nietzsche and some French intellectuals to undermine the good sense of liberal Americans—indeed Nietzsche was the great enemy of nihilism. Rather, nihilism is now the normal condition of our lives to the extent that we all believe that our lives are constituted by what Edwards calls "self-devaluating values." All our values are self-devaluating because we recognize their contingency as values. As Edwards puts it, "Normal nihilism is just the Western intellectual's recognition and tolerance of her own historical and conceptual contingency. To be a normal nihilist is just to acknowledge that, however fervent and essential one's commitment to a particular set of values, that's all one has: a commitment to a particular set of values."

Normal nihilism is not, however, a condition that grips only intellectuals, but rather forms everyone in liberal social orders. Edwards, for example, suggests that one could not want a better exemplification of normal nihilism than the regional shopping mall. In the mall, one not only sees alternative values tenuously jostling one another, but our very participation as consumers means we also indirectly act as the creator of those values. "In air-conditioned comfort one can stroll from life to life, from world to world, complete with appropriate sound effects (beeping computers; roaring lions). Laid out before one are whole lives that one can, if one has the necessary credit line, freely choose to inhabit: devout Christian; high-tech yuppie; Down East guide; great white hunter. This striking transformation of life into lifestyle, the way in which the tools, garments, and attitudes specific to particular times and places become commodities to be marketed to anonymous and rootless consumers: they are the natural (if also banal) expressions of our normal nihilism." Nihilism is the result of having so

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many compact discs from which to choose that, no matter which ones we choose, we are dissatisfied because we cannot be sure we have chosen what we really wanted.

The moral threat is not consumerism or materialism. Such characterizations of the enemy we face as Christians are far too superficial and moralistic. The problem is not just that we have become consumers of our own lives, but that we can conceive of no alternative narrative since we lack any practices that could make such a narrative intelligible. Put differently, the project of modernity was to produce people who believe they should have no story except the story they choose when they have no story. Such a story is called the story of freedom and is assumed to be irreversibly institutionalized economically as market capitalism and politically as democracy. That story and the institutions that embody it is the enemy we must attack through Christian preaching.

I am aware that such a suggestion can only be met with disbelief. You may well think I cannot be serious. Normal nihilism is so wonderfully tolerant. Surely you are not against tolerance? How can anyone be against freedom? Let me assure you I am serious, I am against tolerance, I do not believe the story of freedom is a true or good story. I do not believe it is a good story because it is so clearly a lie. The lie is exposed by simply asking, "Who told you the story that you should have no story except the story you choose when you have no story?" Why should you let that story determine your life? Simply put, the story of freedom has now become our fate.

Consider, for example, the hallmark sentence of the *Casey* decision on abortion: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." This is exactly the view of freedom that John Paul II so eloquently condemns in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. A view of freedom like that embodied in *Casey* assumes, according to John Paul II, that we must be able to create values since freedom enjoys "a primacy over truth, to the point that truth itself would be considered a creation of freedom."

In contrast, John Paul II, who is not afraid to have enemies, reminds us that the good news of the Gospel, known through proclamation, is that we are not fated to be determined by such false stories of freedom. For the truth is that since we are God's good creation we are not free to choose our own stories. Freedom lies not in creating our lives, but in learning to recognize our lives as a gift. We do not receive our lives as though they were a gift, but rather our lives simply *are* a gift: we do not exist first and then receive from God a gift. The great magic of the Gospel is providing us with the skills to acknowledge our life, as created, without resentment and regret. Such skills must be embodied in a community of people across time, constituted by practices such as baptism, preaching, and the Eucharist, which become the means for us to discover God's story for our lives.

The very activity of preaching—the proclamation of a story that cannot be known apart from such proclamation—is an affront to the ethos of freedom. As the Church, we stand under the word because we know we are told what we otherwise could not know. We stand under the word because we know we need to be told what to do. We stand under the word because we do not believe we have minds worth making up on our own. Such guidance is particularly necessary for people like us who have been corrupted by our tolerance.

The liberal nihilists are, of course, right that our lives are contingent, but their account of contingency is unintelligible. Contingent to what? If everything is contingent, then to say we are contingent is simply not interesting. In contrast, Christians know their contingency is a correlative to their status as creatures. To be contingent is to recognize that our lives are intelligible only to the extent that we discover we are characters in a narrative we did not create. The recognition of our created status produces not tolerance, but humility. Humility derives not from the presumption that no one knows the truth, but rather is a virtue dependent on our confidence that God's word is truthful and good.

Ironically, in the world in which we live if you preach with such humility you will more than likely be accused of being arrogant and authoritarian. To be so accused is a sign that the enemy has been engaged. After all, the enemy (who is often enough ourselves) does not like to be reminded that the narratives that constitute our lives are false. Moreover, you had better be ready for a fierce counteroffensive as well as be prepared to take some casualties. God has not promised us safety, but participation in an adventure called the Kingdom. That seems to me to be great good news in a world that is literally dying of boredom.

God has entrusted us, His Church, with the best story in the world. With great ingenuity we have managed, with the aid of much theory, to make that story boring as hell. Theories about meaning are what you get when you forget that the Church and Christians are embattled by subtle enemies who win easily by denying that any war exists. God knows what He is doing in this strange time between "worlds," but hopefully He is inviting us again to engage the enemy through the godly weapons of preaching and sacrament. I pray that we will have the courage and humility to fight the enemy in Walter Rauschenbusch's wonderful words, with "no sword but the truth." According to Rauschenbusch, "such truth reveals lies and their true nature, as when Satan was touched by the spear of Ithuriel. It makes

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injustice quail on its throne, chafe, sneer, abuse, hurl its spear, tender its goal, and finally offer to serve as truth's vassal. But the truth that can do such things is not an old woman wrapped in the spangled robes of earthly authority, bedizened with golden ornaments, the marks of honor given by injustice in turn for services rendered, and muttering dead formulas of the past. The truth that can serve God as the mightiest of his archangels is robed only in love, her weighty limbs unfettered by needless weight, calm-browed, her eyes terrible with beholding God." May our eyes and our preaching be just as terrible. Indeed, may we preach so truthfully that people will call us terrorists. If you preach that way you will never again have to worry about whether a sermon is "meaningful." □

The Bede

(Bedford, Bedfordshire)

Baeda, at times, made his monastic plod from
Wearmouth to Jarrow, from Jarrow to Wearmouth
to Jarrow, but not a foot south of York, no-
where north of Lindisfarne, never a step out
of Northumbria. Baeda kept his travels brief
to reason time in Jarrow, where Thrimilchi
is three months before Weodmonath and the cows
need milking and the weeds grow rankly. What did
he know, untraveled, living in the closets
of Northumbria, to begin *Historia*
Ecclessiastica Gentis Anglorum,
"Britain is an Island lying
in the ocean . . . a considerable length
from the coasts of Germany, Gaul, and Spain?" What
more did Baeda know of Anglorum than "I
have passed the whole of my life within the walls
of some dank monastery?" He was only
a monk from Wearmouth.

Yet what convert
of Baeda's baptized in the stills of the Ousse
another convert (a convert unknown to
Baeda) in a river basin he never
knew, now named in baptismal veneration,
Bedford? And what baptismals and converts of
converts are in the Bedfords, Bedfonts, Bedmonds,
and Bedlingtons around the world Baeda never
knew—on more shores than Germany, Gaul, and Spain,
miles from York, Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Lindisfarne?
And on what shelves rest how many translations
of his *Ecclesiastical History*
of the English People? And where are you, now?
And where is the name of the Venerable Bede?

Jere Odell

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Review Essay

God, Man, and H. L. Mencken

George Weigel

MENCKEN: A LIFE. By FRED HOBSON. *Random House. 650 pp. $35.*

H. L. MENCKEN, MY LIFE AS AUTHOR AND EDITOR. Edited with an introduction by JONATHAN YARDLEY. *Knopf. 450 pp. $30.*

H. L. MENCKEN, THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF NEWSPAPER WORK. Edited by FRED HOBSON, VINCENT FITZPATRICK, and BRADFORD JACOBS. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 390 pp. $34.95.*

H. L. MENCKEN, A SECOND MENCKEN CHRESTOMATHY. Edited with an introduction by TERRY TEACHOUT. *Knopf. 491 pp. $30.*

As an unrepentant son of the Baltimore middle class, I should like to be able to report that I first learned about the old hometown's most famous writer in a suitably dignified manner; that, say, my father lifted his head from his perusal of the *Sun* on the morning of 30 January 1956, and announced, with due solemnity, "Mencken is dead"—after which, the import of the occasion would have been explained to an earnest five-year old. Alas for the bourgeois propriety that the Bad Boy of Baltimore nevertheless cherished, my fascination with Henry Louis Mencken and my attempts to unravel the puzzle of his persona began not around the family board but in circumstances uncomfortably close to some that Mencken pilloried over the years.

If memory serves, it was 1971 and I was spending my summer months as a seminarian-intern at St. Mary Star of the Sea Church in South Baltimore—a rough part of town that Mencken disdained after covering it during his reportorial hazing in 1899. Even more improbably, the agent of my initiation into Menckeniana was Ab Logan, doctoral candidate in English (and thus in Menckenese, an "academic wizard") turned community organizer (and thus a practitioner of what Mencken derided as "uplift"), who sublet office space from the parish. It was Logan who left behind, in an office washroom, a copy of *The Vintage Mencken*, edited by Alistair Cooke. Here, I first read "The Baltimore of the Eighties," Mencken's jaunty, evocative re-creation of the world of my grandparents; here I got my first taste of Mencken, perhaps the best newspaper reporter ever, on "The Nomination of FDR"; and here I discovered "The Archangel Woodrow" (as in Thomas Woodrow Wilson), a book review at once brutal and yet wickedly, deliciously funny. Thus I became addicted to Mencken. Thanks to a professorially defrocked social worker. There are many ironies in the fire, indeed.

I suppose it is theoretically possible that my interest in Mencken might have flagged after a quarter-century or so. But as more than one Menckenian can attest, the master himself plotted to keep his disciples hooked by a crafty gift to Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Library of papers and memoirs placed under a rolling series of time-locks. As these materials have been opened, edited, and published, they have set loose a whole new series of Mencken controversies, decades after his death—just as Mencken, a preternaturally gifted publicist, knew they would.

The first explosion in this postmortem sequence came in 1989, when *The Diary of H. L. Mencken*, edited by Charles A. Fecher, was published by Knopf. Written between 1930 and 1948, the diary's end-of-the-day ruminations on persons and events gave considerable aid and comfort to those who had long believed Mencken a pathological personality. Mencken's own paper, the Baltimore *Sun*, took the lead in denouncing his alleged sundry bigotries, and editor Fecher himself stated, flatly, that "Mencken was an anti-Semite"—a charge carefully and, I believe, persuasively rebutted by Joseph Epstein in *Commentary*.

Two years later, two other memoirs were released: *My Life as Author and Editor*, which Knopf published in 1993 in a volume superbly edited by Jonathan Yardley, and *Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work*, recently issued by the Johns Hopkins University Press. *My Life as Author and Editor* covered Mencken's *Smart Set* period during the flapper era, the beginnings of his work with George Jean Nathan and Alfred Knopf (which later gave birth to the

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American Mercury), and his early relationships with Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Willa Cather. In addition to providing a brisk and amusing account of some of his adventures as a political reporter, *Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work* also chronicles Mencken's efforts to turn the Baltimore *Sun* into the country's most influential paper—a notion that may seem bizarre now (the *Sun* having been reduced to a small satellite in the orbit of the *Los Angeles Times*), but one that had real possibilities in the Roaring Twenties and the New Deal Thirties.

The release of Mencken's long-withheld papers has also energized a bevy of biographers, eager to use the newly available materials to craft a portrait of the Sage more comprehensive than the earlier efforts of William Manchester and Carl Bode. Fred Hobson of the University of North Carolina was first out of the chute in mid-1994 with *Mencken: A Life*, and books by Terry Teachout and Marion Elizabeth Rodgers (already the editor of a volume of correspondence between Mencken and his wife, Sara Powell Haardt) are promised. (A by-product of Teachout's biographical research is the *Second Mencken Chrestomathy*, recently published by Knopf, the contents of which Teachout discovered in five dusty boxes on the top shelf of the closet in the Pratt Library's Mencken Room.) Cheek-by-jowl with all this new attention, however, have come some of the sharpest attacks on Mencken's character ever written. The *Diary*, as noted, led to accusations of racism and anti-Semitism; but perhaps even more damning was Garry Wills' portrait of Mencken as a brutal Social Darwinist in Wills' revisionist reading of the Scopes "Monkey Trial," published in *Under God* in 1990.

All of which has posed some hitherto-unpondered questions for this Menckenian. Why do I find Mencken's writing so irresistible, even as I become ever more aware of the deep shadows in his personality? Why was Mencken such a spectacularly gifted political reporter and such a singularly inept political prognosticator? How could a man with his legendary capacity for friendship, the scintillating conversationalist who was the center of any group before he was twenty-five, be so ugly toward some of his oldest associates in his private descriptions of them? Why have the attempts at serious philosophy in which Mencken put such stock—his *Treatise on the Gods* and his *Treatise on Right and Wrong*—been among his least enduring works, while his entertainments (notably *Happy Days, Newspaper Days*, and *Heathen Days*) seem certain to be read and enjoyed a century from now? Was Mencken, with his lusty disdain for both professional politicians—"the clowns in the ring"—and the "quacks" who ran the New Deal's social engineering shops, a precursor of what would come to be called neoconservatism; or would his libertarian streak, his isolationism, and his eugenics have made him more at home in the farther reaches of the paleoconservative fever swamps?

Finally, and perhaps most intriguingly, what about Mencken and religion—which is to say, in the case of this lifelong agnostic, what about Mencken's general outlook on the human condition, his system of values, his basic character? Was Mencken, for all the felicity of his prose, really the Nietzschean monster drawn by Garry Wills? Or is Mencken another postmortem victim of the idiocies (including the moral idiocies) of political correctness?

II

As Jonathan Yardley notes in his introduction to *My Life as Author and Editor*, Mencken's self-portrait as a man "born with an extraordinary amount of reserve energy" is altogether too modest a description for someone who lived a full, vigorous, and boozy social life while conducting a professional career—as newspaperman, newspaper executive, essayist, book reviewer, book author, magazine editor, philologist, correspondent, and camp counselor to two generations of American writers—"so busy and diverse as to stagger the imagination." And that fantastic energy, which seems to have derived in part from an insatiable fascination with the human comedy, spilled over time and again into Mencken's distinctive prose. Thus the irresistibility of Mencken is, to my mind, the easiest part of him to explain: Mencken is irresistible because he is compulsively readable, and he is compulsively readable because his writing is simply a lot of fun to read.

Indeed, I think it not an exaggeration to suggest that, in his maturity, Mencken—a stylist as distinctively American as Mark Twain, his first literary hero—was virtually incapable of writing a dull sentence. Even when composing a rather straightforward historical narrative like *Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work*, Mencken let fly with exhilarating regularity on almost every other page.

Thus, in 1920, the various aspirants to the Presidency were "the candidates then preparing in their paddocks" for the race ahead. A few months later, after her husband had grabbed the brass ring, reporters noticed a dramatic change in the self-presentation of Mrs. Warren G. Harding: "The last time most of us had seen her she looked like the president of the Christian Endeavor Society of Middletown, but now she almost suggested the Whore of Babylon." Hiram Johnson, who had loftily disdained an invitation to become Harding's running mate in 1920, thereby botching his best shot at the presidency, "became a sort of walking boil" in consequence. At the 1928 Republican Convention, Herbert Hoover, taking no chances, "had all the delegates he needed bought, paid for, and safe in his pens"; at the same Republicanfest, Mencken ran into Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *Nation*, who was "sweating his usual moral indignation." During the Scopes Trial,

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the prohibitionists in Dayton, Tennessee, drank a corn whiskey "fermented in tubs set far back in the mountains, and all sorts of wild creatures, including squirrels, bats, and snakes, took nips of it, got drunk, and were drowned. The locals distilled the ensuing mess without removing the carcasses." At the 1936 convention of the Townsend old-age pensioners, Gerald L. K. Smith, formerly Huey Long's factotum in Louisiana, was much in evidence at the top of Townsend's "hierarchy of attendant wizards and visionaries." Compared to FDR and his "associated quacks," Alf Landon looked "like an honest horse-doctor beside Lydia Pinkham." In 1940, Mencken recalled, Wendell Willkie had been "put up to speak at the annual dinner of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association [and had] made a big hit with the assembled Barabasses"—perhaps by contrast with the insufferable "crooning" of FDR, Mencken's bête noire.

The multiple editions and supplements of *The American Language*, Mencken's pioneering philological investigation of the distinctiveness of spoken and written English in the United States, are similarly enlivened page after page by the vivacity of his prose. Take but one brief example: imagine the stultifying drivel you will read in such recent Modern Language Association convention papers as "Embodied Metaphor as a Cultural Construct: The Cultural Scene as Circle Metaphor in Jane Austen's *Emma*" (or, perhaps, "Redressing the Female Subject: Transvestite Saints' Lives and the Benedictine Reform"), and then savor the breezy yet historically precise way in which Mencken, opening the *American Language*'s eight-hundred-page Fourth Edition, describes the beginnings, and the ultimate futility, of the British assault on the Americanization of English.

> The Jay Treaty of 1794 gave notice that there was still some life left in the British lion, and during the following years, the troubles of the Americans, both at home and abroad, mounted at so appalling a rate that their confidence and elation gradually oozed out of them. Simultaneously, their pretensions began to be attacked with pious vigor by patriotic Britishers, and in no field was the fervor of these brethren more marked than in those of literature and language. . . . [Yet] Americanisms are forcing their way into English all the time, and of late they have been entering at a truly dizzy pace, but they seldom get anything properly describable as a welcome, save from small sects of iconoclasts, and every now and then the general protest against them rises to a roar.

Mencken's effortlessly energetic prose is at its most dulcet in his *Days* books, written during the early 1940s under the urging of Harold Ross and Katherine White of the *New Yorker*. *Happy Days*, the memoir of HLM's boyhood in bourgeois German West Baltimore during the 1880s, begins with this fetching caveat emptor, which might with justice apply to the entire trilogy: "These casual and somewhat chaotic memoirs of days long past are not offered to the nobility and gentry as coldly objective history. They are, on the contrary, excessively subjective, and the record of an event is no doubt often bedizened and adulterated by my response to it. I have made a reasonably honest effort to stick to the cardinal facts, however disgraceful to either the quick or the dead, but no one is better aware than I am of the fallibility of human recollection. . . . As Huck Finn said of *Tom Sawyer*, there are no doubt some stretchers in this book, but mainly it is fact."

With Mencken, though, what you get is fact related through that inimitable prose, as when HLM is introducing us to (and gently defending) his parents and their world:

> My early life was placid, secure, uneventful, and happy. I remember, of course, some griefs and alarms, but they were all trivial, and vanished quickly. There was never an instant in my childhood when I doubted my father's capacity to resolve any difficulty that menaced me, or to beat off any danger. He was always the center of his small world, and in my eyes a man of illimitable puissance and resourcefulness. If we needed anything he got it forthwith, and usually he threw in something that we didn't really need, but only wanted. I never heard of him being ill-treated by a wicked sweat shop owner, or underpaid, or pursued by rent-collectors, or exploited by the Interests, or badgered by the police. My mother, like any normal woman, formulated a large program of desirable improvements in him, and not infrequently labored it at the family hearth, but on the whole their marriage, which had been a love match, was a marked and durable success, and neither of them ever neglected for an instant their duties to their children. We were encapsulated in affection, and kept fat, saucy, and contented. . . . I was a larva of the comfortable and complacent bourgeoisie, though I was quite unaware of the fact until I was along in my teens, and had begun to read indignant books. To belong to that great order of mankind is vaguely discreditable today, but I still maintain my dues-paying membership in it, and continue to believe that it was and is authentically human, and therefore worthy of the attention of philosophers, at least to the extent that the Mayans, Hittites, Kallikuks, and so forth are worthy of it.

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And so it continues for 313 singularly winsome pages of reminiscence, in which a small boy's life in the Golden Age of American cities is chronicled under such typically Menckenian headings as "The Caves of Learning," "Recollections of Academic Orgies," "Memorials of Gormandizing," "First Steps in Divinity," "In the Footsteps of Gutenberg," and "Recreations of a Reactionary."

The tempo changes from andante to allegro con brio in *Newspaper Days*, as the scene shifts from the row houses, alleys, and back yards of Union Square to the raucousness of the newsroom, and Mencken memorializes his adventures as police reporter, city hall reporter, and *Wunderkind* editor on the old Baltimore *Herald*. It was, Mencken believed, "the maddest, gladdest, damndest existence ever enjoyed by mortal youth. At a time when the respectable bourgeois youngsters of my generation were college freshmen, oppressed by simian sophomores and affronted with balderdash daily and hourly by chalky pedagogues, I was at large in a wicked seaport of half a million people, with a front row seat at every public show, as free of the night as of the day, and getting earfuls and eyefuls of instruction in a hundred giddy arcana, none of them taught in schools." The narrative of that experience, in which, as Mencken put it, he laid in "all the worldly wisdom of a police lieutenant, a bartender, a shyster lawyer, [and] a midwife," is one of the greatest invitations to journalism ever issued; it also includes, en passant, the social and political history of a major American city at the turn of the century, including an account of the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904 that is as uncannily accurate as it is amusing.

But it is when Mencken is "writing at the top of his lungs," as the editors of *Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work* put it, that he is most, well, Menckenian. Our age fancies that it invented the newspaper op-ed page and the celebrity columnizer, but for more than forty years, Mencken was a columnist in the *Sun* and elsewhere, and some of his most irresistible prose is found in these gems of daily and weekly journalism.

Thus Mencken on "Gamalielese," the dotty language of Warren G. Harding's inaugural address:

> On the question of the logical content of Dr. Harding's harangue of last Friday, I do not presume to have views. . . . But when it comes to the style of the great man's discourse, I can speak with . . . somewhat more competence, for I have earned most of my livelihood for twenty years past by translating the bad English of a multitude of authors into measurably better English. Thus qualified professionally, I rise to pay my small tribute to Dr. Harding. Setting aside a college professor or two and half a dozen dipsomaniacal newspaper reporters, he takes the first place in my Valhalla of literati. That is, he writes the worst English that I have ever encountered. It reminds me of a string of wet sponges; it reminds me of tattered washing on the line; it reminds me of stale bean soup, of college yells, of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights. It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it. It drags itself out of the dark abysm . . . of pish, and crawls insanely up to the topmost pinnacle of posh. It is rumble and bumble. It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash.

(The *New York Times*, serenely unaware—as ever—of its terminal pomposity, countered editorially that "Mr. Harding's official style is excellent. Its merits are obvious. In the first place, it is a style that looks presidential. It contains the long sentences and big words that are expected. . . . In the President's misty language the great majority see a reflection of their own indeterminate thoughts." To which Mencken replied, "In other words, bosh is the right medicine for boobs.")

Or, in a more mellow vein, try Mencken on Al Smith in 1928:

> It is difficult to make out how any native Marylander, brought up in the tradition of this ancient commonwealth, can fail to have a friendly feeling for Al Smith in the present campaign. He represents as a man almost everything Maryland represents as a State. There is something singularly and refreshingly free, spacious, amiable, hearty, and decent about him. Brought up in poverty, and educated, in so far as he got any education at all, in the harsh school of the city streets, he has yet managed somehow to acquire what is essentially an aristocratic point of view, the habit and color of a gentleman. He is enlightened, he is high-minded, he is upright and trustworthy. What Frederick the Great said of his officers might well be said of him: he will not lie, and he cannot be bought. Not much more could be said of any man.

Or Mencken on the sorry life of Presidents:

> All day long the right hon. lord of us all sits listening solemnly to quacks who pretend to know what the farmers are thinking about in Nebraska and South Carolina, how the Swedes of Minnesota are taking the German moratorium, and how much it would cost in actual votes to let fall a word for beer and light wines. Anon a secretary rushes in with the news that some eminent movie actor or football coach has died, and the President must seize a pen and write a telegram of condolence to the widow. Once a year he is repaid by receiving a cable on his birthday from King George V. . . . There comes

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> a day of public ceremonial, and a chance to make a speech. Alas, it must be made at the annual banquet of some organization that is discovered, at the last minute, to be made up mainly of gentlemen under indictment, or at the tomb of some statesman who escaped impeachment by a hair. A million voters with IQs below 60 have their ears glued to the radio: it takes four days hard work to concoct a speech without a sensible word in it. Four dry Senators get drunk and make a painful scene. The presidential automobile runs over a dog. It rains.

Or Mencken, declaring himself for Al Landon in 1936 (and anticipating the circumstances of many Democrats forty-four years later):

> Nevertheless, and despite all Hell's angels, I shall vote for the Hon. Mr. Landon tomorrow. To a lifelong Democrat, of course, it will be something of a wrench. But it seems to me that the choice is one that genuine Democrats are almost bound to make. On the one side are all the basic principles of their party, handed down from its first days and tried over and over again in the fires of experience; on the other side is a gallimaufry of transparent quackeries, puerile in theory and dangerous in practice. To vote Democratic this year it is necessary, by an unhappy irony, to vote for a Republican. But to vote with the party is to vote for a gang of mountebanks who are no more Democrats than a turkey buzzard is an archangel.

Or Mencken, firing back at the Eastern Shoremen who were threatening a business boycott of Baltimore because his *Evening Sun* column had condemned the lynching of a black prisoner in Salisbury, Maryland, as "a public obscenity worthy of cannibals":

> A third item I lift from the celebrated *Marylander and Herald* of Princess Anne, a leader in the current movement to bust Baltimore by boycott: "One member of the mob took his knife and cut off several toes from the Negro's feet and carried them away with him for souvenirs." What has become of these souvenirs the *Marylander and Herald* does not say. No doubt they now adorn the parlor mantelpiece of some humble but public-spirited Salisbury home, between the engrossed seashell from Ocean City and the family Peruna bottle. I can only hope that they are not deposited eventually with the Maryland Historical Society.

Or Mencken, celebrating the rhetorical powers of the aforementioned Gerald L. K. Smith at the 1936 Townsend pensioners' convention:

> His speech was a magnificent amalgam of each and every American species of rabble-rousing, with embellishments borrowed from the Algonquin Indians and the Cossacks of the Don. It ran the keyboard from the softest sobs and gurgles to the most ear-splitting whoops and howls, and when it was over the 9,000 delegates simply lay back in their pews and yelled.

Or, finally, Mencken on the culinary differences between barbaric New York and epicurean Baltimore, c. 1918:

> No civilized man, save perhaps in mere bravado, would voluntarily eat a fried oyster. . . . Down in Maryland, where the dish originated among the Negro slaves, it is to be had only in cheap lunchrooms and at what are called oyster-suppers, usually held in the cellars of bankrupt churches. The first-class hotels would no more serve it than they would serve pig liver. . . .
>
> In New York, however, there is no such refinement of palate and dignity of feeling. I have seen fried oysters served in one of the most expensive hotels of the town, and the head waiter didn't even put a screen around the table—which would have been done in Baltimore had a United States senator, a foreign ambassador, or some other untutored magnifico insisted upon having them. And in the so-called seafood eating houses, so I hear, they are dished up without the slightest question, and all the year 'round. Imagine a Christian eating a fried oyster in the summer!
>
> Well, the people of New York do even worse; they eat Chesapeake soft crabs fried in batter! What is cannibalism after that? I'd as lief eat a stewed archdeacon.

In terms of sheer technical virtuosity, though, Mencken was arguably at his most impressive as a political reporter working under extreme deadline pressure during the "carnival of buncombe" of a national political convention. Thus HLM would look up from the press box in 1948, note the presence on the platform of the "uniquely slim and smartly clad" Mrs. Dorothy Vredenberg, secretary of the Democratic National Committee, murmur to his colleagues, "This is unprecedented," and write that she had triumphantly defied the tradition that "lady politicians shall resemble British tramp steamers dressed up for the King's birthday." But my personal favorite is "The Wet Wets Triumph," the dispatch Mencken sent to the *Sun* on June 30, 1932, describing the victory of the anti-Prohibitionist forces at the Democratic National Convention—a splendid piece of raillery (and a wholly accurate account of what actually happened) that only Menck-

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en's dourest enemies could resent:

> Since one o'clock this morning Prohibition has been a fugitive in the remote quagmires of the Bible Belt. The chase began thirteen hours earlier, when the resolutions committee of the convention retired to the voluptuous splendors of the Rose Room at the Congress Hotel. For four hours nothing came out of its stronghold save the moaning of converts in mighty travail. Then the Hon. Michael L. Igoe, a round-faced Chicago politician, burst forth with the news that the wet wets of the committee had beaten the damp wets by a vote of 35-17. There ensued a hiatus, while the quarry panted and the bloodhounds bayed. At seven in the evening the chase was resumed in the convention hall, and four hours later Prohibition went out the window to the stately tune of 934 3/4 votes to 213 1/4, or more than four to one. So the flight to the fastnesses of Zion began.
>
> But even down there where Genesis has the police behind it, and an unbaptized man is as rare as a metaphysician, the fugitive is yet harried and oppressed. Only two States, Georgia and Mississippi, showed a solid dry front on the poll, and in Georgia there were plenty of wets lurking behind the unit rule. All the other great commonwealths of the late Confederacy cast votes for the immediate repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act, led by Texas with its solid forty-six, and South Carolina with its solid eighteen. Even Tennessee, the Baptist Holy Land, went eighteen dripping wet to six not so wet. Taking all the Confederate States together, with Kentucky thrown in, they cast 165 votes for the forthright and uncompromising plank of the majority and only 123 for the pussyfooting plank of the minority. In the Middle West the carnage was even more appalling. Kansas voted 12-8 for the minority straddle, but Iowa went the whole hog with loud hosannas, and so did North Dakota, and so did Indiana and Illinois. Even Ohio, the citadel of the Anti-Saloon League, went over to the enemy by 49-2, and Nebraska, the old home of William Jennings Bryan, voted nearly two to one for rum and rebellion.

All of which suggests that Alistair Cooke was right that Mencken, hunched over his battered Corona typewriter with an Uncle Willie's cigar jammed into his mouth, was "the master craftsman of daily journalism in the twentieth century," and that Mencken would be best remembered as a great American humorist.

Critics have argued for decades over the source of Mencken's distinctive imagery, rhythms, viewpoint, and vocabulary. Fred Hobson, Vincent Fitzpatrick, and Bradford Jacobs, three Mencken scholars who edited *Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work*, suggest that HLM's principal inspirations and models were Mark Twain, Finley Peter Dunne (of "Mr. Dooley" fame), George Bernard Shaw, and Will Rogers. But, ultimately, Mencken's irresistibility is a function of the fact that he was, and remains, a stylistic original. Nothing that came before him was ever like him; and no one since has been able to pull off the "Mencken style" quite like the master. The impossibility of successfully imitating him (as demonstrated, for example, by R. Emmett Tyrrell) is the best posthumous evidence for Mencken's striking creativity as a writer.

III

Fred Hobson begins his *Mencken: A Life* by suggesting that Mencken, the man, has "never been adequately explained." The author's hopes notwithstanding, I fear that this remains the case even after Hobson's book. As noted before, Hobson had an advantage over such earlier biographers as the historian William Manchester and the University of Maryland's Carl Bode, for he had full access to the personal papers, diaries, and memoirs that Mencken put under time-lock; but Hobson most frequently deploys these materials not to give us a more capacious and pyschologically complete picture of the many facets of HLM, but to lift the window shades on Mencken's extracurricular love life.

Hobson does advance our understanding of Mencken's demons (and energies) in one crucial respect: he explores in sympathetic detail the adolescent struggle with his father that Mencken let fall through the autobiographical cracks between *Happy Days* and *Newspaper Days*. August Mencken, a successful cigar manufacturer, was determined that his eldest son Henry should follow him into the family business—a trade for which HLM, who desperately wanted to be a newspaperman, was singularly ill-equipped. Hobson reports that the seventeen-year-old Mencken once contemplated suicide in despair of ever breaking free of his father's will. (It seems to me more likely that he would eventually have rebelled, confronted August, and gone his own way—a possibility made moot by August's sudden death at age forty-four, when young Henry was eighteen.) But that Mencken's relationship with his father, whose basic political, social, and religious attitudes he shared, was a volatile compound of affection and deep resentment, Hobson seems to have established rather persuasively. It is an interesting commentary on Mencken's sense of familial propriety that one gets no sense of the drama that had just unfolded, nor the struggle that had preceded it, from the breezy opening lines of *Newspaper Days*: "My father died on Friday, January 13, 1899, and was buried on the ensuing Sunday. On the Monday evening immediately

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following, having shaved with care and put on my best suit of clothes, I presented myself in the city-room of the old Baltimore *Morning Herald*, and applied to Max Ways, the city editor, for a job on his staff. I was eighteen years, four months, and four days old, wore my hair longish and parted in the middle, had on a high stiff collar and an Ascot cravat, and weighed something on the minus side of 120 pounds. I was thus hardly a sight to exhilarate a city editor."

Hobson adds another intriguing piece to the puzzle when he suggests that a pronounced class-consciousness was a mainspring of Mencken's personality. As we have seen, Mencken could poke fun at his own roots as a "larva of the comfortable and complacent bourgeoisie." But for all the good humor about his extended family that permeates *Happy Days*, Mencken had a deep-set family pride (especially in the academic accomplishments of his noble German forebears); and he was painfully aware of his own lack of formal education at the hands of "the brethren who expounded *literae humaniores*," as he once put it. Moreover, and for all the china that got broken in his writing, Mencken was determined to make his mark as a man of solid accomplishment in the world—and thus he took satisfaction in later life from becoming a member of the boards of directors of both the *Sunpapers* and the Knopf publishing house.

Professor Hobson drives the class analysis a bit too hard when he locates Mencken's antipathy toward FDR in HLM's alleged belief that Roosevelt was a class traitor; Mencken's libertarianism, and Roosevelt's slipperiness, were sufficient reason for Mencken to loathe the New Deal, its politics, its moral pretensions, and its sundry coercions and propaganda campaigns. Still, the notion of Mencken as a man convinced that the proprieties of the middle (and, indeed, upper-middle) class were all that lay between him and chaos is an intriguing one, and may even help us understand some of the paradoxes that Hobson posits as distinguishing Menckenian characteristics: the anti-Victorian who in many respects led a decidedly Victorian life; the anti-American who defended the singularity (indeed superiority) of American speech; the author of that blistering critique of the South, "The Sahara of the Bozart," who did more than any other editor to foster the Southern literary renaissance during the 1920s.

But even here, important elements of Mencken's complexity seem to elude Hobson's analysis. For if we are to understand the essential Mencken primarily in class terms, as a self-made bourgeois determined to preserve his hard-won respectability, then what are we to do with what Murray Kempton once called Mencken's "social outrage," which was captured in his 1924 column endorsing Progressive Party candidate Robert W. LaFollette over against John W. Davis and Calvin Coolidge?

> There remains the Wisconsin Red, with his pockets stuffed with Soviet gold. I shall vote for him unhesitatingly and for a plain reason: he is the best man in the running, as a man. . . .
>
> Suppose all Americans were like LaFollette? What a country it would be! No more depressing goosestepping. No more gorillas in hysterical herds. No more trimming and trembling. Does it matter what his ideas are? Personally, I am against four-fifths of them, but what are the odds? They are, at worst, better than the ignominious platitudes of Coolidge. . . .
>
> The older I grow the less I esteem mere ideas. . . . There are only men who have character and men who lack it. LaFollette has it. . . . He is devoid of caution, policy, timidity, baseness—all the immemorial qualities of the politician. He is tremendous when he is right, and he is even more tremendous when he is wrong.

Similarly, Hobson's prism of class does little to illuminate what Joseph Epstein describes as Mencken's exuberant iconoclasm and its appeal to the young across the barriers of class, race, and ethnicity. Thus, in his 1979 Mencken Day lecture at the Pratt Library, Epstein reminded his audience of HLM's impact on the young Richard Wright, as recounted in his autobiography, *Black Boy*.

> That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that?
>
> . . . Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. . . . Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon. No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Mencken liked to describe his distinctive vocation as that of a "critic of ideas," and it is perhaps the greatest of the paradoxes of Mencken's literary life that his more formal philosophical, theological, and political speculations have worn poorly, though he believed them to be among his finest efforts. In a letter to James Branch Cabell explaining his intellectual scheme for the *American Mercury*, Mencken wrote that the new magazine would espouse "an educated Toryism," of the "true Disraelian brand." But how does Toryism, of any sort, square with Mencken's unmitigated belief in the inevitability of progress, especially scientific progress? Why did a man so preternaturally skeptical of all other claims to puissance (as he might have put it) maintain such

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a positivist cast of mind? And how did his positivism square with the gentler side of Mencken's religious agnosticism?

These may be questions of interest to only a few, however, and their lack of resolution need not interfere with anyone's enjoyment of Mencken's writing. After all, do we care all that much about Mark Twain's anti-Catholicism, Finley Peter Dunne's theory of the virtues, or Will Rogers' epistemology? Mencken's lasting reputation is built on his reporting, his philology, his skills as a memoirist, and his work as an editor—a role in which he had, arguably, his greatest influence on American letters.

Here, too, alas, Hobson is something of a disappointment. He skips very lightly indeed over the surface of Mencken's literary criticism (where, according to Kempton, we find the "best Mencken," the first American critic to win the respect of Joseph Conrad); and there is nothing in Hobson to match the detail of Carl Bode's analysis of Mencken's two great magazine projects, the *Smart Set* and the *American Mercury*, in Bode's 1969 biography, *Mencken*. Nor does Hobson sufficiently explore Mencken's incapacities as a political prognosticator.

On a more personal level, Hobson hints at, but never finally resolves, the puzzle of what appears to have been Mencken's essential loneliness. Why did he work so obsessively? Why did he party so hard, or struggle so assiduously to keep his friendships green? Why did he fall so quickly and completely into the pattern of the happy bourgeois husband during the brief five years of his marriage to Sara Haardt? One need not delve into what Mencken himself once described as "Freudian sewage" to detect a lonely man whose boisterous good spirits, iconoclastic public personality, and inimitable style of writing were in some part strategies to keep the demons of loneliness at bay. Perhaps loneliness is, in some measure, every writer's burden: no matter how wide one's circle of friends and colleagues, one is all alone when one picks up the pen or strikes the first letter on the keyboard. (I think it was another felicitous stylist, E. B. White, who said that before he sat down to write, he always had one dry martini, "for courage.") But however ubiquitous the problem may be among the scriveners, Mencken seems to have suffered it to a painful degree.

IV

The question of Mencken's religious views—indeed, the question of whether he was in fact an anti-Christian bigot—was raised anew when Garry Wills defended the progressive, populist Bryan against the elitist, Social Darwinist Mencken in Wills' revisionist reading of the celebrated Scopes "Monkey Trial."

It may help, in assessing these charges, to remember that Garry Wills has been perfectly happy to use, indeed celebrate, Mencken when it suited his political purposes. Wills' contemptuous blast at the suburban-bourgeois Spiro Agnew, in *Nixon Agonistes*, is built around citations from Mencken's 1933 obituary column, "The Coolidge Mystery." Moreover, in his discussion of the Scopes affair, Wills failed to inform the readers of *Under God* that Mencken actually defended the right of the State of Tennessee to pass a law prohibiting the teaching of Darwinism in state-funded classrooms. Indeed, one suspects that what really cobs Garry Wills is that the Scopes Trial, and the interpretation of it that Mencken helped fix in the American mind, marked the end of the alliance between evangelicalism and "progressive politics." (Bryan's campaigns, Wills writes approvingly, had been "the most leftist mounted by a major party's candidate in our history.") For Garry Wills, such current enemies of civilization as Ralph Reed are thus to be blamed on Mencken.

Certainly more generous, and I believe more balanced, is Joseph Epstein's defense of Mencken against the charge of callous elitism:

> In an odd way it was the common man, so regularly bilked by his clergymen, journalists, professors, politicians, in whose defense Mencken wrote. . . . *Homo boobiens* was, well, *boobien*, precisely because he fell—time and again, and yet again—for shoddy mental goods that made his life less good than it might have been, even under the restrictions of the tragic view. . . .
>
> What is more, whenever Mencken registers what might be construed as an objectionable or cruel opinion, one can count on discovering . . . acts of particular kindness that contradict that opinion. He attacks religion, for example, then enters into friendships with nuns and ministers; he relentlessly mocks the pursuit of men by women, then, in middle life, himself marries a woman whose death within a few years is certain. No evidence of envy or unseemly ambition is to be found in the record of his life. Although he did his best to hide it, The Holy Terror, the Bad Boy of Baltimore, appears to have been a very good man.

Perhaps Mencken's most succinct, and yet most telling, discussion of religious conviction comes in a letter he wrote to Marion Bloom, whom he came close to marrying on several occasions in the 1920s. In the wake of her experiences as a nurse in World War I, Marion had become a devotee of Christian Science, a choice of sect guaranteed to set Mencken's teeth on edge. In trying to pry her loose from the shackles of "Ma Eddy," Mencken wrote, in a letter in 1921:

> The God business is really quite simple. No sane man denies that the universe presents phe-

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nomena quite beyond human understanding, and so it is a fair assumption that they are directed by some understanding that is superhuman. But that is as far as sound thought can go. All religions pretend to go further. That is, they pretend to explain the unknowable. As I said long ago, they do it in terms of the not worth knowing. . . . Anyone who pretends to say what God wants or doesn't want, and what the whole show is about, is simply an ass. . . .

In other words, the objection to religion is that it represents an effort by ignorance to account for a mystery that knowledge simply puts aside as intrinsically impenetrable.

Throughout his mature life, Mencken insisted that he was not an atheist (for such a judgment would require a knowledge that was beyond "sound thought") but rather an agnostic. Asked once what he would do if on his death he found himself facing the twelve apostles, he answered (and in this instance we may be sure that beneath the humor lay deep convictions about intellectual honesty), "I would simply say, 'Gentlemen, I was mistaken.'" Imagine Carl Sagan saying such a thing about the possibility of his encounter with a postmortem minyan, and you begin to understand the difference between the agnostic Mencken and the true village atheist.

None of this is to deny that Mencken regularly made mock of religious convictions and practices. But he did it with a deftness and, in most cases, a good humor in which was rarely found the arrogance of sheer contempt. Moreover, Mencken was not insensible to the allure of religion or to religious contributions to what he regarded as the world's meager stock of decency. Thus Mencken on Roman Catholicism in 1923 (and in what some will regard as virtually a prophetic mode):

The Latin Church, which I constantly find myself admiring, despite its frequent astonishing imbecilities, has always kept clearly before it the fact that religion is not a syllogism, but a poem. . . . Rome, indeed, has not only preserved the original poetry in Christianity; it has made capital additions to that poetry—for example, the poetry of the saints, of Mary, and of the liturgy itself. A solemn high mass must be a thousand times as impressive, to a man with any genuine religious sense in him, as the most powerful sermons ever roared under the big-top by a Presbyterian auctioneer of God. In the face of such overwhelming beauty it is not necessary to belabor the faithful with logic; they are better convinced by letting them alone. . . .

[But the Roman] clergy begin to grow argumentative, doctrinaire, ridiculous. It is a pity. . . . If they keep on spoiling poetry and spouting ideas, the day will come when some extra-bombastic deacon will astound humanity and insult God by proposing to translate the liturgy into American, that the faithful may be convinced by it.

Any serious analysis of Mencken's religious views must also contend with his deep disdain for theological liberalism, his intuition (subsequently vindicated) that the quest for "relevance" would make a wreck of mainline Protestantism, and his defense of the dignity of the anti-Modernist position articulated for years by J. Gresham Machen, whom he memorialized as "Dr. Fundamentalis" in the *Evening Sun* of January 18, 1937:

The Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D., who died out in North Dakota on New Year's Day, got, on the whole, a bad press while he lived, and even his obituaries did much less than justice to him. . . .

What caused him to quit the Princeton Theological Seminary and found a seminary of his own was his complete inability, as a theologian, to square the disingenuous evasions of Modernism with the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. He saw clearly that the only effects that could follow diluting and polluting Christianity in the Modernist manner would be its complete abandonment and ruin. Either it was true or it was not true. If, as he believed, it was true, then there could be no compromise with persons who sought to whittle away its essential postulates, however respectable their motives.

Thus he fell out with the reformers who have been trying, in late years, to convert the Presbyterian Church into a kind of literary and social club, devoted vaguely to good works. . . .

It is my belief, as a friendly neutral in all such high and ghostly matters, that the body of doctrine known as Modernism is completely incompatible, not only with anything rationally describable as Christianity, but also with anything deserving to pass as religion in general. Religion, if it is to retain any genuine significance, can never be reduced to a series of sweet attitudes, possible to anyone not actually in jail for felony. It is, on the contrary, a corpus of powerful and profound convictions, many of them not open to logical analysis. . . .

What the Modernists have done . . . [is] to get rid of all the logical difficulties of religion, and yet preserve a generally pious cast of mind. It is a vain enterprise. What they have left, once they have achieved their imprudent scavenging, is hardly more than a row of hollow platitudes, as empty [of] psychological force and effect as so many nursery rhymes. . . . Religion is something else again—in Henrik Ibsen's phrase, something far more deep-down-diving and

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mud-upbringing. Dr. Machen tried to impress that obvious fact upon his fellow adherents of the Geneva Muhammad. He failed—but he was undoubtedly right.

According to his own explicit instructions, Mencken had but the barest of agnostic funeral rituals, with merely a few friends and relatives gathered to bid him farewell before he was cremated and his ashes deposited next to Sara's in Baltimore's Loudon Park cemetery. But his sister Gertrude, with whom he had lived for years and for whom he retained a considerable (if occasionally exasperated) affection, was a pious lady of Episcopalian persuasion, and in her brother's memory she gave a gold chalice and paten to her parish, the Little Church of the Ascension. Some will regard this as an utterly quixotic gesture. I think Mencken would have appreciated it as an act of authentic familial piety, and perhaps as something more.

For if Mencken was the intrinsically lonely man suggested by Fred Hobson's biography, then his incapacity for, but appreciation of, the poetry of faith was doubly tragic. And this Menckenian, who believes that the old man did meet the twelve apostles in the early hours of January 29, 1956, would like to think that they—understanding the tragedy full well, honoring his frank acknowledgment of an invincible ignorance, and knowing his history—invited him in for a beer. ☐

Mother and Daughter at the Lunch Counter

She's her mother's mirror.
Pouched eyes and chin polished
away. Creases at corners
of mouth and nose unmade.

As if the muddy years washed off
like cruel clown make up.
She bounces to my place, coffee
poured with a stage gesture.

Her natural flirt is innocent
as the skull on her tight
T-shirt with the phrase
"Death on the beach."

She can't imagine herself
in her mother's dead grace,
pace dragged by disappointment.
Eighteen's immortal as eight.

So I turn to my airbrushed
reflection, a blue gaze away.
His eyes are for that shirt
and what it holds, no philosophy.

B. R. Strahan

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Books In Review

Parting Ways?

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: VOLUME 2. By WOLFHART PANNENBERG. Translated by GEOFFREY BROMILEY. *Eerdmans. 499 pp. $39.99.*

Reviewed by **Robert W. Jenson**

WHENEVER I am asked to comment on Wolfhart Pannenberg's work, I begin with the same admonition: If we wish to understand any part or aspect of his thinking, we must always remember his initiating concern. He has wanted to lead theology out of what he perceived as its post-World War II isolationist occupation with purely churchly questions. As an intellectual convert to the faith, it seemed obvious to him that since Christian theology claims the one God of all as its object, it is either universal knowledge or it is false. If Pannenberg's theology has latterly become more concerned with churchly matters, it is because he has gained experience of the Church as herself a proleptically universal community.

As Pannenberg sees it, if theology knows anything, it knows the one thing that must be known for anything to be known: how reality is—or will be—a whole. All disciplines must finally make one coherent body of knowledge or lose hold of their matter; and any knowledge of this coherence is in fact knowledge of God—that is, knowledge of what theology is supposed to know. In a particular period of history, other disciplines may not permit themselves to benefit directly from the revelation in Christ, but theology denies itself if it ceases to press the offer. And in its own practice, theology must for the sake of its own authenticity seek out truth and dispute error wherever found. In recent American terms, Pannenberg is no "foundationalist," but only because he believes revelation in Christ is the general epistemic foundation.

There follows from this concern the chief literary and scholarly characteristic of Pannenberg's writings—what makes them sometimes so complexly rewarding, and sometimes so utterly exasperating: his unwillingness to leave anything out, to make any point without seeking every possible source of its illumination, whether by exegeting great chunks of Scripture or by tracing a question through the whole history of philosophy or by suddenly sketching the present state of cosmological physics or by. . . . It is possible to use Pannenberg's major writings as works of general reference, and I sometimes do. Prospective purchasers and readers may be assured—or warned—that the second volume of *Systematic Theology* is a fine specimen of the genre.

FROM THIS CONCERN also follows a chief material characteristic of Pannenberg's thinking: his love of continuity and aversion to paradox and disruption. I began my study at Heidelberg just as Pannenberg was beginning his teaching. My first semester, he lectured on nineteenth-century Protestant theology, which for most of the semester meant Fichte and Schelling and Schleiermacher and Hegel. It was the foundation of this American's knowledge of such matters. More to the point, it was apparent that here was the lecturer's intellectual and even spiritual milieu; for all his sometimes pointed critique, he was at home with and indeed loved these thinkers. When he disagreed with any of them, it was in the way that they disagreed with each other. And that, for example, both Schleiermacher and Hegel, each in his way, construed the Incarnation as comprehensible within a total history whose pattern can in principle be known was not among his problems with them.

I instance the latter point because, of course, our immediate occasion is the *Systematic Theology*'s volume on creation, anthropology, providence, Christology, and atonement. In my judgment, in this volume it becomes fully clear that Pannenberg's systematic theology belongs in the great line of modern historicist-idealist systems. I will instance only a selection of cases in point.

According to Pannenberg, creation is a continuation of the event of divine self-alienation that is the life of the Trinity. The Incarnation is not finally conditioned by the contingency of sin, for what happens at the Incarnation is that the self-distinction of the eternal Son from the Father, which is the ontological principle of creation and its history, itself takes "historical form" and so achieves its full extension. Indeed, the Incarnation is "the self-realization of God in the world." Faith is the ecstasy of reason that does not undo reason because humanity is that one of the creatures in whom creation's constituting ecstasy toward God becomes rational. Or alternatively, faith is the creature's rational self-distinction from God that does not negate the creature because the Logos' self-distinction from God is the creature's ontological basis.

I DO NOT so classify Pannenberg's thinking in order to put it down, as might perhaps be thought. On the contrary, I am myself strongly tempted in some of the same directions. I do it to help understand him. But thereby I do indeed also acknowledge the nagging question about his whole enterprise: may it not be anachronistic?

That depends, I think, on whether Schleiermacher's and Hegel's day is over, on whether modernity is wrapped up—on whether, as it was put in one late-night discussion of Pannenberg's work in a gathering of friends and admirers, the Enlightenment was a blip. At the beginning, I described Pannenberg's initiating concern. I could have said that he set out to combat what have turned out to be initial symptoms of a postmodern theological self-containment and self-satisfaction. The timeliness or untimeliness of Pannenberg's system perhaps depends on whether this

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should or can be combatted.

If postmodernity is or is going to be something really and materially new, then the *Systematic Theology*, in its preoccupation with the great problems of modernity and its paradigmatic exemplification of one sort of modernist thinking, will probably be an historical artifact from the day of its publication. If, as I myself suspect, postmodernity is a purely negative phenomenon, so that such substance as our world may now have will continue to be that of the Enlightenment and later modernity's effort to "overcome" the Enlightenment, it may happen that Pannenberg's work is disregarded only long enough to be rediscovered. Pannenberg says he has no more plans for major writing and intends to cultivate roses and Chopin; perhaps he himself has the same question, and is leaving it to history.

It would not do to review a major work without scraping up some occasion of material disagreement. I again choose a matter that is general in Pannenberg's work but becomes especially clear in the present volume.

It is well known that Pannenberg proclaimed an eschatological reorientation of theology. Thus the whole to which his thought is dedicated is a temporal whole: reality is now unified only because it will be a coherent narrative when history is brought to its conclusion in the Kingdom of God. I was enlightened by this program and by its biblical and philosophical grounding instantly upon encountering it; and my agreement with it is a chief reason of the extensive indebtedness of my thinking to Pannenberg's.

But I have always had a problem. At the very center of Pannenberg's thinking is the notion of prolepsis or anticipation. We can now know the whole that will be only because the conclusion of history appears within history ahead of time, in the resurrection of Christ. Given that prolepsis, we can, moreover, discern a structure of prolepsis throughout reality and our experience of it. Reading Pannenberg, I have probed for an ontological content of his notion of prolepsis; and I have always been frustrated.

Studying this volume, I discovered why. It dawned on me that I had been digging for the wrong sort of thing. I had thought that Pannenberg intended his notion of prolepsis as a piece of revisionary metaphysics, as integral to a reconstrual of time itself. In this volume it becomes clear—at least to me, perhaps everyone else has seen it all along—that he intends something much less odd.

Pannenberg's notion of prolepsis, I now realize, is fully coherent with usual understandings of time and eternity. A prolepsis, as he uses the notion, is simply a claim staked out in history, which, when and if histo-

The SPLENDOR *of* ACCURACY

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ASSERTIONS MADE BY VERITATIS SPLENDOR

Edited by Joseph A. Selling *and* Jan Jans

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S ENCYCLICAL *VERITATIS SPLENDOR* clarified a number of questions about the moral teachings of the post–Vatican II Church, but it has not been received without some serious reservations. The contributors to this timely and much-needed book — all leading Roman Catholic theologians — clearly interpret key statements made by the encyclical and assess the overall accuracy of its moral claims and vision, demonstrating in the process the true significance of this encyclical for Christians today.

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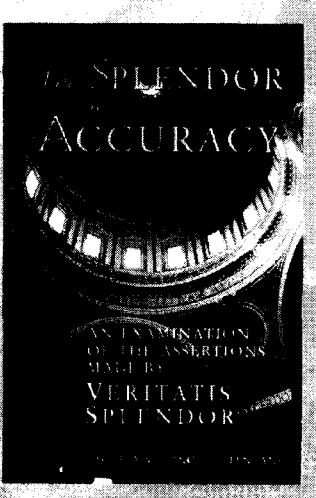

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ry is fulfilled, will be verified or falsified, and which is of such a nature that those who in the meantime have accepted it will all along have been living appropriately to the truth that will at the end be discovered.

So in the present volume Pannenberg uses the notion to deal with the gospel's claim that the cross of Christ made atonement for the whole world, and with the contrary present state of the world, which does not look to be at one with God or itself. The atonement of the world is anticipated, Pannenberg says, in that those who accept the claim of the Cross and live for the unity that it promises are free to live at one with God and neighbor. This is very sound and Melanchtonian, but not metaphysically revolutionary. And in general, as often as Pannenberg in this volume indeed proposes some revisionary *theologoumena*, just as often he shows that his metaphysical convictions are well within the Western mainstream.

This is a disappointment to me. I think Christian theology ought now challenge the Western mainstream's understandings of time and eternity. Since studying *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*, I can no longer claim Pannenberg's fellowship in this craziness. But that something is a disappointment to me is not necessarily a dis-recommendation. It may well be that at this parting of our ways, Pannenberg is the one on the right track.

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The Judicial Culture Wars

JUDICIAL POWER AND AMERICAN CHARACTER: CENSORING OURSELVES IN AN ANXIOUS AGE. By ROBERT F. NAGEL. *Oxford University Press. 208 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by **Phillip E. Johnson**

ROBERT NAGEL, a Professor of Law at the University of Colorado, could have subtitled his new book "The Culture Wars Come to the Supreme Court." It is not so much about the law the Court makes as the rhetoric the Justices employ, and about the role of the Court itself as a forum for enacting a kind of national drama about the anxieties of the American people. Such events as the confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas and Robert Bork are as much a part of that drama as the arguments and opinions in the legal cases. The issues covered in the book encompass the judicial side of the contemporary culture wars: the Bork hearings symbolized the clash of democracy and elitism as the law professors engaged in a fratricidal war; the Thomas hearings involved sexual harassment, rampant careerism, racial preferences, and pornography; and the abortion and flag-burning cases showed Justices openly asking the public to put pressure on other Justices. There is frequent name-calling in the opinions and implicit anxiety that the people may not be up to the high standards of the legal elite.

PHILLIP E. JOHNSON *is Professor of Law at Boalt Hall, the law school of the University of California at Berkeley.*

Reading this rather pessimistic account of the state of the judicial culture made me reflect ambivalently about the Supreme Court in the heyday of Earl Warren, when I saw the institution up close as a law clerk. Were things better then? Thirty years ago, the Court was liberal ideologically but conservative culturally. The Justices were gentlemen, and relations between them were cordial. I remember Warren saying that he planned to assign a certain opinion to the conservative Justice John Marshall Harlan because it was a rare instance where Harlan was in the liberal majority, and that "it would make John feel good" to be the leader of the liberal wing for once. Whatever rivalries existed under the surface, the prevailing atmosphere was one of good will and mutual respect.

THE LIBERAL MAJORITY itself was animated by a sense of purpose. The Constitution was being brought to life. Racism was being addressed and slowly overcome; rights of criminal defendants that had existed only on paper were becoming a reality. The Court itself, despite its detractors, had gained an immense prestige as the conscience of the nation. The Justices loved their work, and it seemed to every law clerk that being a Supreme Court Justice was the finest prize that life could offer.

Some of this confidence was justified, but much of it was founded upon illusion. The Court itself was the very archetype of the "liberal plantation," with the blacks in menial roles, the women present as secretaries, and the Justices genial as only secure aristocrats can be. (I well remember the distaste with which some very liberal Justices, who later became passionate advocates of feminism, regarded the prospect of having to employ a female law clerk.) The underside of the Court's prestige was its hubris, as the Justices got the idea they could impose simplistic solutions on complicated problems. The good will that the Court won on the race issue was squandered on the abortion wars, and the political process ensured that the Court became as divided as the country itself.

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Evangelical Theology TODAY

What About Those Who Have Never Heard? *edited by John Sanders*

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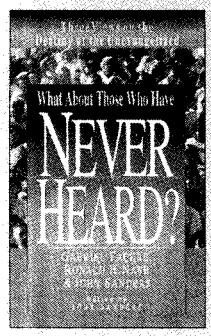

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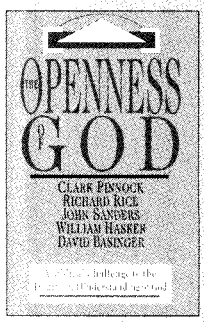
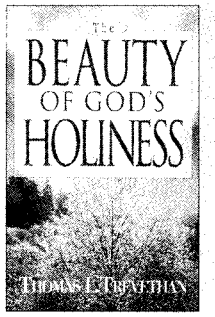


The Beauty of God's Holiness *by Thomas L. Trevethan*

Combining the fervor of a manifesto and the thoughtfulness of a devotional guide, Thomas L. Trevethan's *The Beauty of God's Holiness* is solidly grounded in the Reformed tradition. *276 pages, paper, 0-8308-**1607**-0, $14.99 (available May 1995)*



Unbounded Love *by Clark H. Pinnock & Robert C. Brow*

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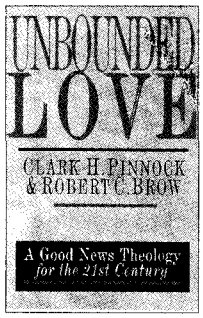

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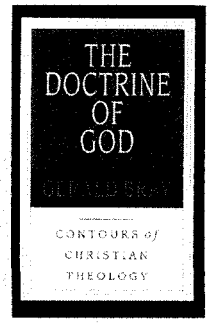

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I suspect it is a lot less enjoyable to be a Justice today.

Unlike most leading constitutional law scholars, Nagel is more determined to understand our situation than to peddle a set of answers. For this reason, he tends to see similarities of method where others would see differences in ideology. Justice Blackmun appeals over the heads of his colleagues to the pro-choice movement in abortion politics; Chief Justice Rehnquist does the same in the flag-burning case. Robert Bork, Laurence Tribe, Ronald Dworkin, and law professors as a class are all similar in the rationalistic approach to problems that, at least in the estimation of the public and the politicians, require more heart and less head. The problem is not that neither the right nor the left wing of the legal elite has yet won the field; the problem is that the legal elite as a whole is thoroughly implicated in the culture wars.

NAGEL'S ANALYSIS is not as politically neutral in effect as that summary might suggest, however, for the legal elite in our time has been dominated by liberal ideology. Liberals continue to advance, and a success for conservatives is to slow the advance or perhaps trim it a bit. Conservative Justices even join the liberal parade on particularly important occasions. The right to abortion was proclaimed under the leadership of Nixon appointees, and reaffirmed by Reagan appointees. The notorious "Lemon test" that has been so useful in advancing the secularization of society came not from Earl Warren, but Warren Earl Burger.

These legal rules exist for the purpose of keeping fundamental questions under the control of the knowledge class, which is the Court's real constituency. Even the "one person, one vote" principle of the reapportionment cases was not a populist reform, but a measure that increased the power of the voting blocs most subject to the influence of the national media. If it is a fault to distrust the people, and to insist that democracy must be guided by the presuppositions of an intellectual elite, then by some magic that fault has an inherent tendency to benefit the cultural left.

Robert Nagel is one of the more original scholars in the field of constitutional law, and his work is helping to take legal thinking in a direction I applaud. Too much of legal scholarship is devoted to advancing a political program, with rhetorical gimmicks employed to make the author's partisan notions sound like neutral constitutional principles. Nagel's viewpoint is conservative in a broad sense, but not in a narrowly partisan sense. He is concerned with the virtues and vices of the citizens and their leaders, because the national character is more important in shaping the society than the legal rules that purport to govern it. The model for this kind of scholarship is Alexis de Toqueville, and it is a model I hope many others choose to follow.

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The Case for Christianity

IS CHRISTIANITY TRUE? By HUGO A. MEYNELL. *Catholic University of America Press. 149 pp. $24.95 cloth, $14.95 paper.*

Reviewed by **Paul J. Griffiths**

APOLOGETICS—the traditional intellectual exercise of defense of Christian belief against attacks from rivals and the attempt to show the superiority of Christian belief—has seen something of a revival among philosophically minded Christians in recent decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, in Europe and the United States, it was difficult to find serious professional philosophers defending the truth of Christianity. It is no longer difficult. The work of Richard Swinburne at Oxford, Alvin Plantinga at Notre Dame, and Nicholas Wolterstorff at Yale has taken apologetics out of the ecclesiastical backwaters and returned it to the philosophical mainstream.

Hugo Meynell's book is an elegant and clear example of this resurgent interest in apologetics. Meynell considers four common objections to Christian doctrine—that belief in God is morally irrelevant; that there is no reason to believe in the special claims of Christianity over those of non-Christian religions; that no sense can be made of the doctrines of Incarnation, Atonement, and the Trinity (or that these doctrines are for other reasons implausible); and that Christian doctrine about life after death is based upon an indefensible view of the nature of human persons—and shows to his own satisfaction that these objections can be met. It should be noted that Meynell predicates his discussion on the prior assumption that God exists. This is not because Meynell takes that assumption to be indefensible or incapable of demonstration; it is rather that the existence of God is not his topic in

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this book.

Meynell's strategy in his chapter on the relevance of theism to right moral behavior is typical. He begins by arguing that belief in God does have specifically moral effects upon those who have it: it enables us to act upon our beliefs about what it is right for us to do, and enables us to correct our pressing and depressing tendencies toward self-deception and self-interest. And he then argues that philosophical challenges to this view of the relations between theism and right action fail. The principal challenge he has in mind is the claim that Socrates' question in the *Euthyphro* —whether the gods love what is good because it is good, or whether what they love is good merely because they love it—cannot be answered without incoherence. Meynell answers it effectively with an essentially Thomist version of divine-command ethics. The upshot of the chapter is not that theists are better people than atheists. It is the more modest (and true) conclusion that theists have no good reason to abandon their belief that theism is relevant to moral beliefs and actions.

Meynell's treatment of whether one can reasonably assent to the special claims of Christianity in the face of knowledge about the conflicting doctrines of non-Christian religions is unfortunately much weaker. He shows only that it is not necessarily incoherent to do so and that there are important and irreconcilable doctrinal disagreements among the major religions. But he does not seem to see the force and importance of the interesting epistemological question of whether the knowledge that there are faithful religious persons who believe things incompatible with one's own beliefs changes the degree and kind of one's assent to those beliefs. Neither does his sketchy attempt to state the uniqueness of Christianity do any more, so far as I can see, than say that Christianity is more like itself than is anything else—which is true, but not exciting.

In his defense of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Trinity, Meynell addresses first their coherence, and second their plausibility in the light of historical-critical study of the Bible. On the first front he succeeds admirably in sketching, very briefly, a form of these doctrines that is at least not prima facie incoherent, and that is congruent with the historic credal affirmations of the Church. In passing, as well, he manages to summarize very briefly and very lucidly just what the Councils of the Church were after in formulating and defending the orthodox Christological and Trinitarian dogmas. Meynell's own sketch of the content of the doctrine of the Trinity is largely epistemological in intent. He employs the basic insight, expressed by many Christian theologians from Augustine to Aquinas, that human

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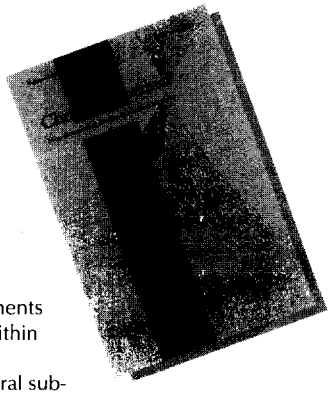

Editors: H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., B. Andrew Lustig, and Kevin Wm Wildes, S.J.

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consciousness provides us "with an analogy by which we can achieve some understanding . . . of the mystery of the Trinity." By looking closely at the structures of human self-estrangement and self-deception, Meynell says, we can see a distorted mirror-image of the relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and so gain some actual knowledge of the Divine relations.

On the second front—that of showing the key Christian doctrines not to have been invalidated by historical-critical study of the Bible—Meynell is rather less effective. He is rightly clear that the key Christian doctrines could in principle be falsified by such study, which is to say that they have an irreducible historical component. He is usually clear that the evidence available is simply not of a kind to make firm conclusions as to, for example, what Jesus did or did not say possible for the disinterested historian, and that historians who think they can arrive at such conclusions always betray commitments to metaphysical or epistemological beliefs held independently of their activity as historians. These two points would suffice for Meynell's philosophical needs at this point in his argument. It is unfortunate, then, that he chooses to spend several pages defending a particular view of the historicity of the Gospel of John, a view that may or may not be correct but whose correctness is not at all required, so far as I can see, for the remainder of his argument.

MEYNELL APPROACHES his final topic, whether it is proper to believe in life after death, by arguing first that philosophical attempts to show the incoherence of human persons existing without their bodies have failed (which is the same as to say that some forms of dualism—mind/body, flesh/spirit, or the like—have not been shown to be false). He then argues that Christian orthodoxy requires some such belief. And he concludes that there is some empirical evidence for postmortem survival. In all this he is eminently and lucidly correct.

I would have liked more in this chapter on the interesting question of whether there are good reasons that Christians should refrain from engaging their intellects or their imaginations in this matter, beyond the basic affirmation that there must be postmortem existence. I think there are good biblical and theological reasons why Christians should avoid imagining or arguing about the details of the next life. Meynell seems not to think so, and I would have liked to be told why.

Meynell's book is, then, largely successful in its goal, which is to show that inquiry into the matters it discusses "might have been subversive of Christianity; but as a matter of fact . . . is not so." This, of course, is a relatively modest goal. Meynell has not shown, and does not take himself to have shown, that Christianity is true. This suggests that the book might better have been titled *Is Christianity Reasonable?* since Meynell certainly does succeed in showing this much.

It is unfortunate that Meynell seems in general to be somewhat behind the times in his knowledge of contemporary philosophy, biblical criticism, and the like. All too often, both the opponents he engages and the allies he enlists are from a generation or more ago. This by itself is not necessarily a problem, and may even be an advantage if the best work in the fields under discussion was done then. But in several areas of Meynell's discussion this is not the case. On questions of mind/body dualism, for instance, the most recent and best work is that by such as Thomas Nagel (pro) and Derek Parfit (contra), while the works that Meynell mentions and discusses are less subtle and interesting. His argument would have gained considerably from engaging more recent work. Similarly, on the question of the historicity of the Gospel of John, Meynell relies mostly on a twenty-year-old work by J. A. T. Robinson that on the whole was not well received when it came out. Even more distressing is Meynell's apparently blithe ignorance of the best recent constructive work by Christian philosophers on topics of central concern to him. In addition to those I mentioned in the first paragraph of this review, Meynell should take some account of the work of such as Robert Adams, Bill Wainwright, and Bill Alston. Engaging and using their work would have supported and improved his.

But these are cavils. Meynell's work is full of intellectual energy, is a delight to read, and argues for theses that are largely true. And it is written by a man who can use the word "forsooth" with panache and can appeal to P. G. Wodehouse in the context of a discussion of the Trinity. What more could one want?

The Need for Moral Memory

THE WAGES OF GUILT: MEMORIES OF WAR IN GERMANY AND JAPAN. By IAN BURUMA. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 330 pp. $25.*

FACTORIES OF DEATH: JAPANESE BIOLOGICAL WARFARE 1932-45 AND THE AMERICAN COVER-UP. By SHELDON HARRIS. *Routledge. 295 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by
Joan Frawley Desmond

FIFTY YEARS have elapsed since the close of the Second World War, but the image of Germany and Japan as outlaw nations—incorrigibly aggressive and brutal—remains compelling. In the aftermath of the Nuremberg trials for crimes against humanity, Auschwitz emerged as a symbol of German identity—acknowledged not only by the Allies but eventually by the Germans themselves. The Tokyo war crimes trials, however, crudely managed by the Americans and roundly criticized by the Japanese as "victors' justice," did not produce an equally disturbing symbol of national identity for the Japanese. But in recent years fresh evidence of both wartime atrocities and revisionist efforts to whitewash the historical record have solidified pub-

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lic support for Japan's "peace constitution." It seems that the Japanese, like the Germans, have a sense that they cannot trust themselves.

The notion that some nations are inherently barbarous is rejected in *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, Ian Buruma's engrossing political travelogue. Political structures, rather than racial or cultural values, determine a nation's destiny in Buruma's view. Citizens who mutter darkly about the fatal flaws of their national character would be better advised to strengthen their democratic values and institutions. Observing the recent rise of neo-Nazi violence in Germany, the author contends:

> People are dangerous everywhere when leaders acquire unlimited power and followers are given license to bully others weaker than themselves. . . . But such is not the situation in the German Federal Republic, or indeed in Japan, today. Human nature has not changed, but politics have. In both countries, the rascals can be voted out. Those who choose to ignore that, and look instead for national marks of Cain, have learned nothing.

Buruma's belief in democratic political activity as a vaccination against militaristic ideology follows his thorough deconstruction of German and Japanese memorials, political debates, textbook conflicts, and artistic works devoted to the war. The young Dutch author made his reputation as an ironic observer of changing Japanese society with *Behind the Mask*, published in 1984. And though his latest travelogue does not match the acidic brilliance of V. S. Naipal's work, it nonetheless deserves to attract Western audiences interested in the political culture of Asia's leading economy. Buruma's only serious deficiency is his apparent ambition to be more than a writer of political travelogues. When he touches on deeper issues involving Germany and Japan's future moral direction, he offers some surprisingly superficial—and purely secular—solutions.

In *The Wages of Guilt*, Buruma untangles the web of mythology, politicized history, and guilt that has cloaked national dialogue in Germany and Japan on an array of topics (including participation in the Gulf War). The most revealing segments of this travelogue deal with memories of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and Nanking. Here the author addresses two different issues: the Germans' obsession with atonement, and the Japanese problem of "historical amnesia."

Germany's parallel war against the Jews—"not really a war at all," but "mass murder pure and simple, not for reasons of strategy or tactics, but of ideology alone"—continues to overshadow German politics and culture. Fear of moral contamination or, conversely, dishonoring Jewish victims, overshadows every attempt by historians, writers, and artists to come to grips with the Holocaust.

Buruma examines the almost neurotic scrupulosity of tone and style among German writers on the Holocaust. Fearful that kitsch might violate the memory of the Holocaust, writers tend to avoid the subject entirely.

Buruma's favorite poem evoking that time is Paul Celon's *Death Fugue*:

> Black milk of daybreak
> we drink you at night
> we drink you at midday
> Death is a master from Germany . . .

But Buruma points out that "Holocaust," a televised miniseries imported from America, did more to raise the nation's consciousness than any literary or dramatic works produced by the fastidious Germans.

The author shows how the Holocaust has cast a shadow over the entire Nazi era, subverting every attempt to approach that time with objectivity. National history between 1933 and 1945 has been taught as a morality play, for Germans could do nothing else with events that are "within living memory."

Over the decades, museums were transformed into memorials and political discourse adopted a religious tone, as the 1968 generation struggled to sort through the jumble of memory, history, and guilt. The generation that embraced the left as a refuge from anti-Semitism still cannot make even basic political distinctions. Thus, the U.S. aerial bombing of Baghdad during the Gulf War is described by a German peace activist

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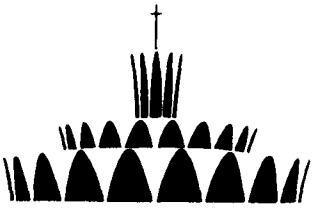

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as "the greatest war crime since Hitler."

For the author, the younger Germans—concerned but not self-righteous about the Nazi era—offer hope that the nation can confront the past successfully. Young Germans have been among the thousands who demonstrated against recent anti-immigrant violence; the author notes that over "half the population of Munich" participated in one such public protest. Buruma also applauds new history texts that approach the Nazi period "not as a morality tale, but as a period in history, structurally, politically, and culturally connected to what happened before and after."

Of course, West German scrupulosity regarding the Holocaust has not been replicated in eastern Germany, where Soviet-approved textbooks and museums played Communist heroism against capitalist-inspired aggression. Germans who have spent their lives in the East know little of the war against the Jews and have not participated in a nationwide effort of moral reeducation.

THE CONTRAST between Germany's preoccupation with atonement and Japan's case of "historical amnesia" is most evident in the embrace of Hiroshima by the Japanese as a symbol of victimhood and martyrdom.

For many Japanese, modern Hiroshima, specifically, the Hiroshima Peace Museum, is a "Mecca of world peace," a kind of religious center where visitors can contemplate both the evil of war and the atrocities committed against Japanese civilians. A Hiroshima professor describes the dropping of the atomic bomb as "the worst sin committed in the twentieth century," while typical artistic treatments of the explosion lack, in the author's eyes, "any sense of a wider world beyond."

Yet, during the war, Hiroshima had been a bustling military center, not an isolated province. The Second General Headquarters of the Imperial Army was located in the city, which also had served as a military base for both the Sino-Japanese and the Russian-Japanese Wars.

These unsavory facts are acknowledged by the left, which, nevertheless, shares Japanese conservatives' antipathy for the United States, the dominant partner in Japan's postwar security arrangements. Leftists distrust Washington for tampering with Article Nine of Japan's constitution during the Cold War and for making pacifist Japan an "accomplice" in subsequent conflicts.

Even in liberal political circles, the argument is often made that the bomb purified Japan of war guilt, earning it the right "to sit in judgment of others, specifically the United States, whenever they show signs of sinning against the 'Hiroshima spirit,'" Buruma notes. This approach provides the moral underpinnings for Japanese Peace Education, still a subject of considerable debate. The author understands why U.S. involvement in Japanese politics has yielded these contradictory impulses, but he rejects a pacifism that "turns national guilt into a virtue, almost a mark of superiority, when compared to the complacency of other nations. It can also be the cause of historical myopia."

Historical myopia is very much in evidence as the Japanese gaze shifts from Hiroshima to Nanking, site of wartime atrocities perpetrated by the Imperial Army. In Germany, only fringe groups contend that the Holocaust never took place. In Japan, establishment conservatives still cling to the view that reports of widespread massacres of Chinese civilians are wildly exaggerated, or that the killings were an inevitable consequence of wartime conditions.

The younger generation's knowledge of these contested events is uneven, for textbook debates pitting the conservative Ministry of Education against crusading leftist teachers usually result in deadlock. Further, while in German textbooks political resistance has been elevated to the status of a high moral virtue, in Japan the conformist values that fed the war effort have never been seriously challenged.

INDEED, while the majority of older Japanese accept the fact that atrocities did take place, they lack a moral framework—or at least the proper language—for a deeper public examination of national guilt. It is here that one glimpses part of Japan's problem. As a great, non-Western, modernized nation, it wants more international respect and influence. Yet it always seems to be playing catch-up, struggling to deal with newly important political and moral issues it previously deemed irrelevant.

Hirohito's Japan did not match the moral descent of Hitler's Germany. Yet, during the postwar era, the Germans have gained considerably more political maturity than the Japanese. Buruma believes the problem can be traced, in part, to the "peace constitution" that Washington imposed on Tokyo. In his view, the constitution has prevented the nation from attaining political adulthood. "Without political responsibility—precisely over matters of war and peace—Japan cannot develop a grown-up attitude toward the past," Buruma contends. "Political change must come first; the mentality will follow."

Most Japanese voters would reject the author's dark view of the constitution, believing that the state, unhampered by constitutional limits, might again drive the nation into another senseless war. There may be good reasons for their fears, but this reviewer is more concerned with Buruma's embrace of politics as the key to a changed Japanese "mentality."

The experience of democratic political participation is indeed essential, but politics in isolation cannot sustain a democracy. The contemporary American experience illustrates the political breakdown that follows a decline in moral and religious values. Meanwhile, in totalitarian societies religious communities have supplied breathing space for nascent democratic movements. In Eastern Europe, Soviet leaders viewed Christianity as a threat to totalitarian rule. The churches fueled independent democratic resistance precisely because they refused to make politics ultimate.

Building his case for a purely secular politics—without expressly say-

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ing so—Buruma pauses to consider the views of Ruth Benedict, whose seminal work, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, juxtaposed the moral values of Western and Asian religious systems. Benedict argued that the West operated as a guilt culture concerned with moral absolutes and personal responsibility. Japan reflected a Confucian "shame culture," in which the individual was concerned with public exposure rather than with guilt or atonement. But after going to the trouble of restating Benedict's thesis, the author continues on his path, making no real attempt to discriminate between faith and ideology or among the political philosophies of Christianity, Shintoism, and Marxism.

Buruma's difficulty with religion is strange, for while he calls on the Japanese to accept individual responsibility for their democracy, he discounts the power of religious principles that urge precisely that. A telling segment is his treatment of Nagasaki Mayor Motoshima Hitoshi, a Christian politician who ignited a political firestorm when he observed that the "emperor bore responsibility for the war."

The author concedes that Motoshima's willingness to speak out may be a direct response to his faith's moral precepts, but then Buruma decides that the mayor's faith is not the point. "Justice may well be a Christian concept to him, but his statement was secular, and so was its effect." The author goes on to applaud the invigorating debate provoked by the mayor's remarks: "This was not the voice of God, Marx, or sacred ancestors. It was the voice of reason."

It is difficult to grasp Buruma's point here. Does he mean that Christians only act as religious believers when they explicitly refer to their faith? And does he mean that political discourse informed by faith must, necessarily, be unreasonable?

Buruma proposes a politics untainted by faith as the solution for societies grappling with profound questions of collective moral responsibility. His religion lesson would be news to Christians in the newly democratic states of Eastern Europe. But in the Japanese context, Buruma is right to regard the political role of organized religion, specifically state Shinto, with suspicion. Visitors to Japanese POW camps at the time of the surrender observed the routine brutality of younger recruits who had been "thoroughly drilled in Kodo and state Shinto" and found sport in beheading POWs and raping local women.

Since the war, efforts have been made to separate the original elements of Shinto from the ideology of religious nationalism imposed by Japanese leaders. But even this trend is not universal. Shinto priests still tend Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, where military hardware decorates this controversial memorial to the war dead, including the Kamikaze pilots sent on suicide missions. Could a newly revived Shinto or Buddhist faith provide an ethical system suitable for a modern nation that shows no broad commitment to any form of organized religion? For now, these ancient faiths seem ill-prepared to fill the vacuum at the heart of Japanese society. New religions of various kinds are striving to play that role. They may not succeed, but there is no sign that any form of politics can fill religion's traditional roll as wellspring of moral virtue.

Over the past decade, Japanese political leaders have issued a series of public apologies for wartime aggression and atrocities. But these public statements, though groundbreaking events for the Japanese, have not erased the impression of moral evasion.

Buruma believes lingering national confusion regarding Japan's responsibility for its war record is a consequence of General MacArthur's decision to grant immunity to the emperor. Only Hirohito was allowed to emerge from the war purified of moral responsibility. Yet every atrocity had been committed in his name. The deeply ingrained myth of Japanese racial superiority had its roots in the Emperor system, as did Japanese dreams for a Pan-Asian Empire. If Hirohito had been purified, so had every soldier in the Imperial Army.

The Tokyo war crimes trials were handled by foreigners who knew little of Japan's hierarchical "system of irresponsibilities," in which the lines of authority and personal responsibility remained ambiguous. And Japanese leaders could not understand international condemnation for actions they shrugged off as the inevitable consequence of military conflict.

Among the worst Japanese crimes against humanity were those com-

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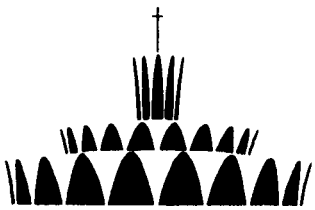

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mitted by medical units engaged in biological warfare research. Knowledge of these atrocities committed far from the battle scene might have shaken the Japanese, but they were never informed. The Allied Tribunal in Tokyo convicted twenty-five major war criminals, men responsible for the Nanking massacre, the destruction of Manila, and the Bataan death march. Absent from the trials were the military administrators and doctors who infected Chinese villages with plague and anthrax and performed vivisection on living human "logs." The U.S. military, which sought both to study the results of the research and to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining access to the data, suppressed all evidence of Japanese biological warfare research.

THE DIABOLICAL OPERATIONS of Japanese biological warfare research in Manchuria encompasses the first half of *Factories of Death* by Sheldon H. Harris, a former Professor of History at California State University, Northridge. Dr. Harris' research is extensive, covering the methods, activities, and results of the medical teams engaged in wartime research. Though the author is no stylist, the evidence he sets forth provides a sickening portrait of Japanese wartime morality unhinged from any system of moral absolutes.

According to Harris' research, U.S. investigators seemed unperturbed by the enormity of the evil exposed before them. They focused solely on its intelligence value. "In all the considerable documentation that has survived," Harris writes, "not one individual is chronicled as having said that BW human experiments were an abomination, and that their perpetrators should be prosecuted." Apparently, U.S. scientists engaged in biological warfare research were attracted by the Japanese "forbidden fruit." Harris posits that American scientists "were prohibited by law and a code of ethics that denied researchers access to involuntary human experimentation. . . . Japanese scientists didn't operate under similar constraints."

That furtive era seems distant when compared with our more open defiance of moral norms in fetal experimentation, for example. Still, the elements of the plot are strangely familiar: euphemisms replace the proper labeling of the subject as a human being; ideology sweeps away traditional restraints on the killing of innocents; moral corruption spreads, producing a bland indifference in the face of evil. Late last year, a panel of U.S. scientists sought federal approval for the creation of human life, destined for destruction following laboratory experiments. The President seemed poised to accept the panel's decision and crushed the proposal only after the Republican landslide.

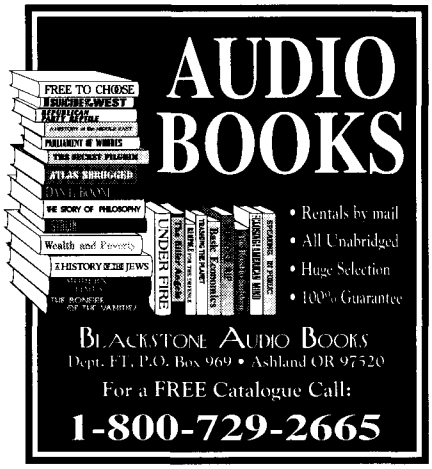
And yet the public debate provoked by the scientists' proposal may be a sign of moral health in our democracy. There is in America deep resistance to direct assaults on human life, and this has spawned a movement that is gloriously single-minded in its commitment to "life issues." This kind of vigorous political participation, underlining a deep sense of personal responsibility, may prevent us from becoming a nation that no longer "trusts itself."

"It was the German people who willed the end; Hitler who willed the means," Paul Johnson observed in *Modern Times*. The Germans and the Japanese are right to reflect on the roots of wartime depravity, but the rest of the West can hardly take its own democratic traditions or moral foundations for granted.

BRIEFLY NOTED

WHAT WENT WRONG? THE CREATION AND COLLAPSE OF THE BLACK-JEWISH ALLIANCE. By MURRAY FRIEDMAN. *Free Press. 423 pp. $24.95.*

The American Jewish Congress reported in January that black and Jewish members of the U.S. Congress continue to share "a common core of interests and values," but in *What Went Wrong?* Murray Friedman is less confident. Not surprisingly, he looks back in nostalgia to the days when Jews and blacks fought together for civil rights and social reform. Since the 1960s Jews and blacks have instead fought each other over affirmative action, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and city neighborhoods. Some blacks have recently argued that Jews have always sought to manipulate American blacks for their own Jewish purposes. But Mr. Friedman has written an engrossing book rescuing the history of black and Jewish relations. Manipulation theories cannot explain Allard Lowenstein or Kivie



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Kaplan, or Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner (murdered in Mississippi while registering black voters). Without Jewish votes, black mayors might not have been elected in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. But Mr. Friedman makes some questionable assumptions in *What Went Wrong?* The 1960s "alliance" was never as warm as it seems in nostalgia to have been. Blacks and Jews cooperated because it was in their interest to do so. That they do not walk entirely together anymore is a sign of political maturity. The book ends on a sad note. Jews appear obsessed with talking things out with blacks under the presumption that talk is beneficial in and of itself. "Blacks will sometimes indulge Jews in these efforts," Mr. Friedman notes, but their responses "are at best halfhearted."

— Edward S. Shapiro

RELIGIONS OF INDIA IN PRACTICE. Edited by DONALD S. LOPEZ, JR. *Princeton University Press. 648 pp. $59.50 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

This is the first volume in Princeton's new series of anthologies of religious texts. The series hopes, by its choice of works, to represent the variety within each religion, and to emphasize practice (ritual and devotion) over doctrine. So this volume draws heavily from India's vernacular (i.e., non-Sanskrit) religious literature, and includes Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Islamic works—but, oddly, nothing Christian. Much of the material appears here in English for the first time. The translations, on the whole, read well, sometimes beautifully, providing much matter for those who want to meditate, theologically or otherwise, upon humanity's religious yearnings and obsessions.

— Paul J. Griffiths

THE RESPONSIBILITY PEOPLE. Edited by WILLIAM MCKINNEY. *Eerdmans. 377 pp. $24.99 paper.*

The Lilly Endowment funded a "Senior Leaders" program in which the Hartford Seminary brought together a group of people who had been at the top of mainline Protestant denominations and ecumenical agencies in the last forty years. Most of the names are familiar to those who have followed the fortunes and misfortunes of liberal Protestant denominations over the decades: James M. Ault, Arie Brouwer, Robert C. Campbell, Joseph H. Evans, Robert Marshall, James K. Matthews, Gerald Moede, Robert W. Neff, Avery D. Post, David Preus, Claire Randall, Kenneth L. Teegarden, William Thompson. The subject of their extended discussions was "What went wrong?" Of course that is not how they put it. Editor McKinney describes the group as "the last generation of leaders of established Protestantism and the first generation of leaders of post-established Protestantism." Needless to say, he is not referring to the conservative Protestantism that has in some respects displaced the oldline. Some of these leaders strongly emphasize what they think went right, and stress the ways in which the problem was that they were misunderstood both by their own constituencies and the larger culture. There is a poignant combination of the complaisant and complacent as these leaders reflect on their stewardship; they want to be nice, except to "conservatives," and they think they did their best, which, all in all, they believe was pretty good. Kenneth Teegarden of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) wants to be remembered for his formulation of a creed for the non-credal Disciples. The creed declares: "While stressing freedom and diversity under God, they believe unity and mission are inseparable, and witness and serve among the whole human family in the interest of peace, justice, mercy, and kindness." And, he gives us to believe, we would have had a kinder and gentler world, too, if those conservatives hadn't come along. With such treacly bromides these leaders describe what they fancied to be their "prophetic" ministries. Typical is Doris (Dodie) Younger who headed Church Women United until 1989. She says that CWU was free "to put all our strength into such issues as racism, corporate responsibility, poverty of women, peace, and the empowerment of women in the churches. Therefore, we could take stands that were frequently ahead of the churches from which women came." True, there were conservatives who withdrew, "but many women in local units, and almost all of the women who are elected to national office, are committed to the more liberal stance on which CWU has always prided itself." Never mind that the organization is a shadow of its former self; the

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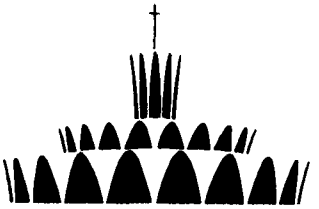

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important thing is that it is going down with its liberal pride intact. Most of the book is composed of interviews. Rambling, repetitious, and unedited, they will nonetheless serve as useful grist for the historian who will one day provide a worthy account of the remarkable, and remarkably rapid, decline of what used to be mainline Protestantism. This book fairly represents some of the people who were, as the title says, responsible.

— *Janet Marsden*

MODERN HALAKHAH FOR OUR TIME. By EMANUEL RACKMAN. *KTAV. 195 pp. $29.50.*

ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY: PLURALISTIC APPROACHES TO COVENANTAL ETHICS. By WALTER S. WURZBURGER. *Jewish Publication Society. 156 pp. $20.*

The respective authors of these volumes are exemplars of the liberal, or Modern, Orthodoxy that emerged from Yeshiva University in the postwar years. More a socio-intellectual style than a doctrine, postwar Modern Orthodoxy maintained an unapologetic commitment to traditional, largely unmodified, halakhah, while articulating its beliefs in terms of, and engaging in sincere dialogue with, the Western intellectual tradition. Rabbis Rackman and Wurzburger are both highly respected rabbinical and communal figures committed to a generous intellectual pluralism that yields interesting results. In his *Modern Halakhah for Our Time* Emanuel Rackman wields his considerable erudition in both Jewish and Anglo-American law to demonstrate that within the bounds of traditional halakhah there is to be found considerable diversity, creativity, and responsiveness to social change. This play in the joints is no accident of exile or imprecision, he maintains, but derives from the nature of the enterprise, as the halakhist must not only try to discern the divinely mandated norm, but "must also veer frequently between antithetical values found in the basic norm, the Covenant itself, such as universalism and particularism, freedom and self-control, the needs of society and the needs of the self, this-worldliness and other-worldliness." Walter Wurzburger, in his graceful and learned essay *Ethics of Responsibility*, reconciles theocentric ethics with the dictates of a disciplined, educated conscience, arguing that when specific halakhic rules are not available or fall short, ethical beliefs, grounded in tradition, can step into the breach. "Human freedom, creativity, and responsibility are indispensable to the fulfillment of the divinely assigned task, which involves more than blind submission to the divine will." Thus "as long as their conduct conforms to halakhic standards, individuals are free to select whatever ideals are most suitable to their respective personalities." Both authors have enjoyed distinguished careers as communal leaders as well as academics. As Orthodoxy sways increasingly to "the right," their inheritors increasingly find themselves relegated to pockets of academia and other corners of the intelligentsia. Their very attractive ideas are entrusted to an uncertain future.

— *Yehudah Mirsky*

THE CLASH OF GODS: A REINTERPRETATION OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART. By THOMAS F. MATHEWS. *Princeton University Press. 223 pp. $49.50.*

It is commonplace to view the relation between early Christianity and Roman culture as a clash of ideas. In this provocative and revisionist book, Thomas Mathews, an art historian at New York University, shows that it was also a clash of images. In contrast to the prevailing view that images of Christ were modeled on images of the emperors, Mathews argues that Christian artists consciously avoided imperial imagery, choosing instead to put Christ into competition with the images of the ancient gods. Within the space of several generations a "highly nuanced visual imagery" that had developed over the course of a millennium was discarded and a new set of images was created, drawing in part on biblical stories and parables (Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the good shepherd, etc.). "The lanky Good Shepherd of Early Christian art wrestled with the muscular Hercules and won," writes Mathews. Whatever the judgment of art historians on Mathews' highly controversial argument, the book is a pleasure to read, richly illustrated (138 illustrations, many in color) and handsomely produced, and it can serve as an up-to-date primer on early Christian art.

— *Robert L. Wilken*

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA: THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION. Translated from the Greek and introduced by CATHARINE P. ROTH. *St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. 130 pp. $6.95.*

In recent years St. Vladimir's Press has published a number of patristic texts in paperbound translations, e.g. John of Damascus' three treatises *On the Divine Images*, Athanasius of Alexandria's *On the Incarnation*, several homilies of John Chrysostom *On Marriage and Family Life*. The most recent volume is a fresh translation by Catharine Roth of Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. This work, written as a dialogue (modeled in part on Plato's *Phaedo*) between Gregory and his older sister Macrina (who instructs Gregory) on the resurrection, was occasioned by the death of their brother Basil the Great. It is not, however, an occasional writing, but a systematic discussion of the nature of the soul (with an extensive digression on the passions and how desire gives place to love in our relation to God), death, resurrection, and the restoration of all things. This is one of Gregory's most important works and it is very good to have it available in an up-to-date translation with helpful notes in an inexpensive edition.

— *RLW*

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT: THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE SECULAR. By STANLEY HAUERWAS. *Duke University Press. 237 pp. $24.95.*

Irrepressible, incorrigible, provocative, outrageous, fresh, feisty, coura-

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geous—all are terms regularly applied to the author. And since he appears from time to time in these pages (including this issue), readers know that all those terms, and more, apply. Who else could turn an essay titled "Why Gays (as a Group) Are Morally Superior to Christians (as a Group)" into a clarion call for Christians to stand by the truths of their tradition? For well over twenty years, Hauerwas has been a major figure on the American theological scene, advancing a wisdom born of learning and experience under the unsuccessful disguise of *enfant terrible* of the academic guild. Hauerwas fans, and those who want to know why there are so many of them, will not want to miss *Dispatches from the Front.*

DOSTOEVSKY: THE MIRACULOUS YEARS, 1865-1871. By JOSEPH FRANK. *Princeton University Press. 523 pp. $35.*

No age gets the literary biography that it deserves; there is something about the careful research and careful reading necessary for writing a biography of a writer that, once every generation, forces a biographer to rise to greatness. And, since 1977, through all the silly season of postmodern and deconstructive literary criticism, Joseph Frank has been publishing to widespread acclaim the volumes of his truly great biography of Dostoevsky. Covering the six years in which Dostoevsky unbelievably wrote *Crime and Punishment, The Gambler, The Idiot,* and more besides, the new fourth volume continues to combine literary analysis and factual biography in a compelling way: explaining the financial disaster of Dostoevsky's attempts to run a magazine, his marriage and flight to western Europe, his famous quarrel with Turgenev, and his writing—always his writing. Frank continually returns, as Dostoevsky would have wanted, to the books themselves, analyzing each text and placing it within Dostoevsky's life and growing understanding of Christianity and Russian life. Readers of FIRST THINGS must read this biography, for they will find in Joseph Frank's account of Dostoevsky great resources for their own understanding of religion and public life.

JEWISH VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE. By SIMCHA PAULL RAPHAEL. *Aronson. 474 pp. $40.*

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I DIE: JEWISH VIEWS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH. By RIFAT SONSINO and DANIEL B. SYME. *Aronson. 147 pp. $22.50.*

Simcha Paull Raphael has produced a learned and comprehensive historical survey that refutes the popular nostrum that Judaism has been, or can be, unconcerned with the afterlife. Indeed, as the author shows, Judaism's understanding of otherworldly destiny has always been intimately bound up with its ethical concern for this world. The Jewish approach to the afterlife is not imported from Christianity; rather, it provided the moral grounding for Christian reflection and teaching on the subject. Moreover, the visionary Midrash of the Middle Ages contain "depictions of postmortem worlds that range from the macabre to the sublime," with "graphic details of life after death, no less fantastic than Dante's *Divine Comedy.*" *What Happens After I Die?* by Sonsino and Syme (originally published by UAHC Press, 1990) offers a brief summary of Jewish views on the afterlife, followed by personal testimonies of several contemporary American Jewish thinkers—some of whom believe in postmortem existence and some of whom do not.

YUGOSLAVIAN INFERNO. By PAUL MOJZES. *Continuum. 248 pp. $24.95.*

Even to call the mess of Balkan states "Yugoslavia" is to imply an etiology and a solution to their multisided war, but Prof. Mojzes sees all too well that the moment when a democratic, fully Yugoslavian solution was possible is now irretrievably lost. This book presents a balanced and informative account of the war that manages, unlike the wishful thinking of many Americans, to take seriously

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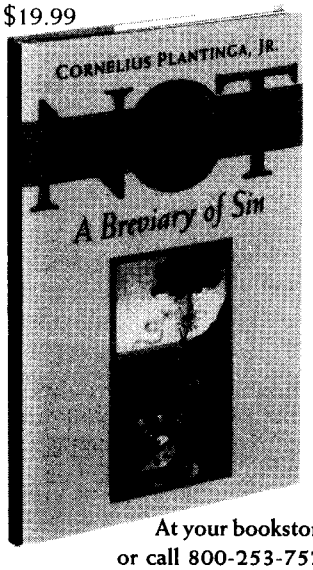

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the dark and bloody crossroads where religion and nationalism continue to meet. Though the situation in Yugoslavia changes day by day, this book is invaluable for understanding the roots and possible termination of the war.

JESUS—MIRIAM'S CHILD, SOPHIA'S PROPHET: CRITICAL ISSUES IN FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY. By ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA. *Continuum. 262 pp. $22.95.*

Praising in her opening paragraph her own bravery and energy in writing yet another book of feminist theology during these reactionary times, Prof. Fiorenza has written a brave little book that dares to dismiss as stupid and sexist everything that everyone who lived before her ever thought about Christian theology. It's hard to know in what her bravery consists, since Prof. Fiorenza received a $10,000 prize for this book and became an established professor at Harvard University for writing similar books, but brave and energetic she congratulates herself for being. The cowardly and weary reader will let the book pass by.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF CITIZENS. Edited by DON E. EBERLY. *University Press of America. 376 pp. $29.50.*

Nearly every book on public policy published nowadays demands that we strengthen our communities. But what we need instead is some practical advice on exactly how we are supposed to do it, and *Building a Community of Citizens* undertakes to give us that advice. A collection of twenty-three essays by various authors, with a long introduction by the editor, the book is understandably uneven in quality, but consistent in outlook. The loss of civic virtue and civil society has ruined our cities and made irrelevant the endless debates between radicals and reactionaries. From the political center (broadly conceived) we need to issue forth and do the hard, personal work of building up the mediating institutions so weakened in our society. The essays are very helpful for this work, though the book's easy assumption that it lies at the political center will, understandably, be challenged by some.

DANCING ALONE: THE QUEST FOR ORTHODOX FAITH IN THE AGE OF FALSE RELIGIONS. By FRANK SCHAEFFER. *Holy Cross Orthodox Press (Brookline, Mass.). 326 pp. $20 paper.*

When the author, son of famed evangelical teacher Francis Schaeffer, became Greek Orthodox, eyebrows were raised. With the zeal of a convert, which can be a commendable thing, Mr. Schaeffer explains his move, and along the way leaves no doubt that he thinks everybody in the hopelessly decadent and theologically compromised Protestant and Roman Catholic communities should do as he has done. "Those lost and confused secularists, Protestants, Roman Catholics, and others who are looking for something *transcendent, sacred, and steadfast* in a confused, desacralized world, must be invited into the Church—the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Orthodox Church of the ages. True, lasting 'ecumenical unity' will occur when all Christians come home." Even those who are unpursuaded by the argument that it is also their home may appreciate Mr. Schaeffer's joy in his new home.

NOT THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE: A BREVIARY OF SIN. By CORNELIUS PLANTINGA, JR. *Eerdmans. 202 pp. $19.99.*

A part appeared in these pages ("The Sinner and the Fool," October 1994), and readers who thought that article was as great as we did will not want to miss the book. This breviary (meaning summary) of the cardinal sins recasts traditional wisdom in lively engagement with the follies and fads of a culture that, with a dreary lack of imagination, fancies itself beyond sin. Bracing stuff, highly recommended for the deeper things that ail us.

JOHN WESLEY'S SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY. By THOMAS C. ODEN. *Zondervan. 376 pp. $22.99 paper.*

Subtitled "A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Doctrine," this study by Thomas Oden of Drew University challenges the commonplace that Wesley was not a systematic thinker. He makes a persuasive case that Wesley presented a coherent, and remarkably catholic, understanding of the faith in a form relatively unscathed by the great discontinuities of the continental Reformation. This book gives further evidence of the capacity of Oden, a United Methodist, to bridge divides and give new credibility to the notion of ecumenical theology.

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Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security
Alexander F. C. Webster
Foreword by George Huntston Williams

THE PRICE OF PROPHECY

Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security

Alexander F. C. Webster

Foreword by George Huntston Williams

As Eastern Europe struggles to emerge from its Communist past, the public moral witness of its Orthodox Churches has assumed a special importance to Americans seeking a truly just world order. Yet how many Americans know what these vast and ancient Christian Churches stand for, especially on crucial issues of freedom and human rights, war and peace, and national security?

In this compelling look at the Orthodox Churches in Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and the United States, Fr. Alexander F. C. Webster mines the primary sources to reveal a story of both betrayal of the Church and fidelity to its moral tradition. He reflects on how these Churches can become forceful and consistent voices of moral witness in society.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

A Martyr

Fifty years ago, on April 9, a few weeks before the collapse of the Third Reich, and on the direct orders of Adolf Hitler, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, shortly before his thirty-ninth birthday, was hanged at the Flössenburg prison camp. As a witness (i.e., martyr) and a theologian, Bonhoeffer has had a powerful and fully warranted influence on contemporary Christian thought. Early on he recognized the demonic in Hitler and his movement of National Socialism. He joined with others in launching a "confessing church" that bore uncompromising testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ and against the false gods of Blood, Soil, and Volk. Forbidden to teach by the Nazis in 1936, he was lecturing in the U.S. when war broke out in 1939. He refused a teaching post here, believing it his duty to return and suffer with his people so that, when the war was over, he would have earned a right to take part in the rebuilding of his country. He taught in an underground seminary, worked with associates in the intelligence services for the overthrow of Hitler, helped Jews get out of the country, and kept up a steady correspondence with friends on questions spiritual, theological, and ethical. Arrested in 1943, he was imprisoned in Buchenwald before being transferred to the camp where he was killed.

His most accessible and popular book is *The Cost of Discipleship*. Not to have read it is to be spiritually deprived. *Letters and Papers from Prison* is the work that has been most discussed in theological circles, and in the 1960s was much invoked (wrongly, I believe) by the "death of God" theologians and those promoting sundry versions of "religionless Christianity." Of the major works, *Ethics* is the weightiest and richest, and is sadly neglected today. In that book and in *The Communion of Saints*, Bonhoeffer was remarkably prescient in analyzing the limits of the Reformation and the imperative of reconciliation with the Catholic Church. Had he survived the war, it seems likely that that cause of reconciliation would have been central to his efforts for a renewal of Christianity.

Many years ago I shared a platform with a theologian who suggested that Bonhoeffer's opposition to Nazism was essentially aesthetic; it was the ugliness of the movement that first alerted him to the movement's evil. At the time I thought this a rather improbable hypothesis that ran the risk of diminishing the moral and intellectual dimensions of Bonhoeffer's conviction. But in the intervening years I have come to appreciate—with no little help from studying Hans Urs von Balthasar—the inextricable entanglement of the three transcendentals—the good, the true, and the beautiful. Reflecting on Bonhoeffer in the theological journal *dialog*, Jean Bethke Elshtain addresses the aesthetic under the rubric of shame:

"One of the reasons Dietrich Bonhoeffer was so repulsed by Nazism was precisely because of its aberrant shamelessness. Nazi ideology dictated erasing any barrier between public and private, between that which should be open to public scrutiny and definition and that which should not. The horrific denouement of an ideology that required breaching the boundary of shame was the shamelessness of death camps where human beings were robbed of dignity, stripped of privacy, deprived, therefore, of an elemental freedom of the body in life and of the respect we accord the bodies of the dead after life is no more. Scenes of starved, naked bodies, piles and piles being shoved by bulldozers into lime pits, is a nigh inexpressible instance of shamelessness, with the dead reduced to anonymous carcasses."

Bonhoeffer understood that the great temptation is to forget that we are not God, that we are creatures living in a world whose fragmentation cannot be overcome by our efforts. Elshtain writes:

"Bonhoeffer insists that we ongoingly give witness to that which torments us—our knowledge of division. He deepens this insistency in the *Ethics* and ties his argument explicitly to the sin of political or public overcoming that requires a norm of

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shamelessness in order for it to do its dirty work, dirty no more, or so is the claim, because the ruthless deed-doers know no evil. They have overturned all received values. Humility is servility in their eyes. Recognition of limits, cowardice. Decency, gullibility. Skepticism, treason. Jesus Christ crucified a religion for infants by contrast to the muscular religion of the virile and the shameless. In a world in which all barriers to action and expression have been crushed, we are no longer open to Bonhoeffer's quiet but firm recognition when he writes: 'The peculiar fact that we lower our eyes when a stranger's eye meets our gaze is not a sign of remorse for a fault, but a sign of that shame which, when it knows that it is seen, is reminded of something it lacks, namely, the lost wholeness of life, its own nakedness.'"

In Bonhoeffer's view, the radical—whether Nazi, Marxist, or of some other apocalyptic obsession—always hates the created world. "The radical cannot forgive God His creation. He has fallen out with the created world. . . . It is Christ's gift to the Christian that he should be reconciled with the world as it is, but now this reconciliation is accounted a betrayal and denial of Christ. It is replaced by bitterness, suspicion, and contempt for men and the world." He repeatedly asserts that "our responsibility is not infinite but limited." Each of us is "appointed to the concrete and therefore limited responsibility which knows the world as being created, loved, condemned, and reconciled by God."

Very few thinkers and very few lives have been so formative for this writer as the thought and life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In a predecessor publication to this journal called *The Religion and Society Report,* we ran an extended series under the title "Bonhoeffer Today." We've thought about doing that again, and maybe we will. Meanwhile, amid the many public observances fifty years after the war's end, the remembrance of Bonhoeffer braces us for the war unending against delusions that blind us to both God's judgment and God's grace.

FT

Those Victorians

"When one gives up the Christian faith," said Nietzsche about those "English flatheads," the Victorians, "one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet." G. K. Chesterton put the same complaint more gently but just as seriously: the Victorians, he wrote, were the first people ever to ask their children "to worship the hearth without the altar." In both England and America, Victorian preachers, novelists, poets, and statesmen alike struggled hard to maintain a national ethic of private domesticity and public respectability without the church and chapel in which that ethic was born. The result was all too predictable. The national ethic became identified with the interest of the middle class promoting it; Edwardian artists and intellectuals delighted endlessly in exposing the powerlessness of conventional Victorian virtues; and even the phrase "Victorian virtues" became a synonym for hypocrisy.

Before signing up with the anti-Victorians, however, you must read Gertrude Himmelfarb's latest collection of essays, *The De-moralization of Society* (Knopf), for an account of just how strong and long-lasting those Victorian virtues were—even in an era of declining faith. From the ascension of Queen Victoria in 1837 to her death in 1901, as Prof. Himmelfarb shows, the crime rate, the poverty rate, and the rate of illegitimate births were not just stable, but actually declining. There really was some reason for the much-mocked Victorian confidence and self-congratulation. "Having written two lengthy books on poverty in Victorian England," Prof. Himmelfarb notes, "I am painfully aware of the difficulties and inequalities in Victorian life . . . class distinctions, social prejudices, abuses of authority, constraints on personal liberty, restrictions and hindrances of all sorts. But I have also learned to be appreciative of those values that helped mitigate the harsh realities of life. . . . It was no small feat for England, in a period of massive social and economic changes, to attain a degree of civility and humaneness that was the envy of the rest of the world."

The key to the strength of Victorian virtues was that those virtues were not, in fact, just middle class but were shared by nearly everyone: from the Queen down to the poorest Cockney, nearly everyone believed in the public good that came from observance of the national ethic. "Hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue," La Rochefoucauld famously said, and Prof. Himmelfarb points out with obvious pleasure that the fabled Victorian hypocrisy is actually proof of how widely the Victorian virtues were held to be virtues. (She even gives the consummate example of Victorian hypocrisy in a certain Dr. Pritchard, who in 1865, a few months after poisoning his mother-in-law, poisoned his wife one morning and piously set down in his diary that afternoon: "Like a calm peaceful lamb of God, passed Minnie away. May God and Jesus, Holy Gh.—one in three—welcome Minnie. Prayer on prayer till mine be o'er, everlasting love.")

The way the Victorians managed to preserve their national ethic, Prof. Himmelfarb claims, was by constant moralizing. Even the "freethinkers" felt compelled to assert morality all the more strenuously for their denial of God. From the richest

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to the poorest, "the Victorians were avowedly, unashamedly, incorrigibly, moralists." By comparison, "'It's only my opinion, of course'"—the rider invariably attached to any post-Victorian moralizing—"is hardly a stirring faith by which to order one's private life. Still less is it a creed for public life." Nietzsche was right, of course; without belief in God the public morality must, in the long run, finally collapse into either anarchy or tyranny—and most likely into tyranny following anarchy. But Prof. Himmelfarb does well to remind us just how long that Victorian run was, even if the collapse was not into tyranny or anarchy.

Following shortly after her much acclaimed *On Looking Into the Abyss*, Prof. Himmelfarb gives us with this book a most useful historical referent by which to evaluate the indicators of cultural decline in our society. But the book offers more than additional confirmation for those of the hell-in-handbasket school of cultural analysis. It invites us to consider the maddening ways in which morality (good) is, in the real world, inextricably entangled with moralism (bad). We must, of course, continue to insist upon the distinction between the two, while quite soberly recognizing that many will think it a distinction without a difference. In pulling up the tares of moralism, they also pull up the wheat of morality. As we have been told on the highest authority, we must tolerate the tares for the sake of the wheat. It is not a very satisfactory conclusion but, as Prof. Himmelfarb has forcefully reminded us in the course of her distinguished career, we live in a not very satisfactory world. With equal persuasiveness, she makes the case that public moral expectations need not be as low as they are in contemporary America. Sophisticates may smirk at the great expectations of the Victorians—and there was no shortage of smirking sophisticates at the time—but the Victorians understood, as most in our culture do not, that there is a necessary connection between being good and pretending to be good. One can, without endorsing hypocrisy, observe that we could do with a lot more tribute to virtue. And, of course, the happy fact is that virtue, too, can pay tribute to virtue, and, in the course of doing so, invite others to act upon their capacity to be virtuous. Living this way may prompt some people to call you Victorian. If that happens, just smile nicely and say thank you.

FT

NOBODY SAID IT WOULD BE EASY

The ever turbulent waters of evangelicalism continue to be roiled by the declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." (Turbulence, be it understood, is frequently a sign of vitality.) A number of evangelical leaders with very large constituencies sharply criticized the declaration as a betrayal of the central Reformation belief in "justification by faith alone." On January 19, at the initiative of Charles Colson, several evangelicals who have signed ECT met with some of their chief critics at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, which maintains a national television ministry under the leadership of Dr. D. James Kennedy. Out of the meeting came a statement signed by Colson, James Packer of Regent College, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade, and Kent Hill of Eastern Nazarene College, all of whom had signed ECT. Other evangelicals who endorsed ECT are also being asked to sign. The statement reads:

> We Protestants who signed ECT took this action to advance Christian fellowship, cooperation, and mutual trust among true Christians in the North American cultural crisis and in the worldwide task of evangelism. The same concern leads us now to elucidate our ECT commitment by stating:
>
> 1. Our para-church cooperation with evangelically committed Roman Catholics for the pursuit of agreed objectives does not imply acceptance of Roman Catholic doctrinal distinctives or endorsement of the Roman Catholic church system.
> 2. We understand the statement that "we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ" in terms of the substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness of Christ, leading to full assurance of eternal salvation; we seek to testify in all circumstances and contexts to this, the historic Protestant understanding of salvation by faith alone (sola fide).
> 3. While we view all who profess to be Christian—Protestant and Catholic and Orthodox—with charity and hope, our confidence that anyone is truly a brother or sister in Christ depends not only on the content of his or her confession but on our perceiving signs of regeneration in his or her life.
> 4. Though we reject proselytizing as ECT defines it (that is "sheep stealing" for denominational aggrandizement), we hold that evangelism and church planting are always

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legitimate, whatever forms of church life are present already.

5. We think that the further theological discussions that ECT promised should begin as soon as possible.

We make these applicatory clarifications of our commitment as supporters of ECT in order to prevent divisive misunderstandings of our beliefs and purposes.

The Ft. Lauderdale statement is to be warmly welcomed. It is a useful clarification that is entirely consistent with what all of us understood the evangelical signers of ECT to believe. Moreover, it helpfully advances the continuing discussion for which ECT explicitly calls. Especially welcome in view of Catholic and evangelical differences on the relationship between justification and sanctification is the affirmation that "our confidence that anyone is truly a brother or sister in Christ depends not only on the content of his or her confession but on our perceiving signs of regeneration in his or her life."

Far from being problematic, it is downright refreshing when theology is taken seriously enough to generate intelligent controversy. Too many statements aimed at furthering Christian unity have about them a "make nice" quality that is positively deadly. ECT was intended to be taken seriously, to be a beginning in overcoming hostilities that have been around for centuries, and to nurture patterns of convergence and cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics. We did not think this would be done easily or without controversy, and we were right. Most of us, if not all of us, who were involved in ECT will not be around to see what difference it finally makes. Put differently, we will, please God, be viewing developments from a happier circumstance where it will not be necessary to issue theological clarifications on who is and who is not a brother or sister in Christ.

FT

Transgressions Against a Harsh Faith

We started with some sympathy for Francis Lawrence, the tangle-tongued president of Rutgers University. Last November, an hour and a half into a rambling luncheon talk to the faculty, Pres. Lawrence damaged Rutgers and nearly destroyed his own career by uttering the pernicious statement that blacks lack the "genetic, hereditary background to have a higher average" on college entrance exams. He didn't mean it, of course; he didn't even think it. His tired tongue just got tangled up in four different (politically correct) propositions, and—Freud's claim that all such slips have unconscious causes aside—he expressed in an unacceptable way his perfectly acceptable thought that standardized tests should not be used to exclude black students. This is a man, after all, who publicly boasts that he refuses to read *The Bell Curve* because the book is "morally wrong."

Our sympathy declined, however, as we learned from news accounts the extent to which Pres. Lawrence built for others the pyre on which he now burns, the extent to which he has been hoist with his own petard, the extent to which he nursed the pinion that impelled the steel, the extent to which . . . (you get the idea; as they say on the streets: what goes around, comes around). Why, asks John Leo in *U.S. News & World Report*, is his own constituency so willing to bring him down with protests, disrupted basketball games, and boycotts, when Pres. Lawrence worked so hard to make Rutgers a campus that "bristles with the enforcement tools of diversity: a speech code, real courses replaced by 'multicultural curricular change,' diversity awareness 'training' in lectures and freshman orientation sessions, a tolerance for ethnic and racial segregation in dorms ('a self-affirming environment,' as Lawrence puts it), and professors who learn not to raise unapproved ideas about race, gender, and the campus power system built around multiculturalism"?

One answer appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*. The luncheon talk was being taped by the faculty not because anyone suspected Pres. Lawrence of racist tendencies, but because he had been fighting with the American Association of University Professors over post-tenure review, and the union members were looking for something to use against him. The only extraordinary thing about the tape, released over two months after the talk, is how long the union took to realize what a weapon it had in its hands.

John Leo, however, seeks a fuller explanation of the startling viciousness with which Pres. Lawrence's own turned on him. "Multiculturalism," he writes, "has evolved into a harsh faith, strong on punishment and eager to monitor isolated phrases for signs of heresy. . . . In the current environment, a single ambiguous phrase or sentence can bring devastating charges of harassment or speech code violation. Much of multiculturalism's energy is devoted to this hunt for stray words and phrases that supposedly reflect horrible hidden biases. But if you train followers to overreact by pouncing on passing phrases, eventually this dubious skill will be turned against leaders. The Lawrence case merely shows that bishops of this church can be excommunicated too, even the good ones who praise every dogma and never read forbidden books."

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The *New York Times*, of course, is having none of it. "Not only was the remark racist," writes columnist Bob Herbert, "it was an expression of the bedrock concept on which the entire edifice of white racism is built." That is probably true, though neither Mr. Herbert nor Pres. Lawrence seems to realize that it is the ugly, racist "bedrock" on which the edifices of their beloved affirmative action and multiculturalism are built as well.

FT

DISINGENUITY SO OBVIOUS

With touching concern for the welfare of the Republican Party, an editorial in the very Democratic *New York Times* warns that abortion is the issue that "could split the party open" and takes Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition to task for having "overplayed his hand" and endangered the Republicans' electoral chances with his demand for pro-life candidates. The editorial is accompanied by a chart that purports to show that the GOP has a 61 percent pro-abortion majority. It achieves this by adding together every Republican with the least hesitation in asserting that all abortions should be banned outright.

Equating a desire for restrictions on abortions with being pro-abortion marks an interesting editorial shift from the *Times* we used to know—the *Times* that used to equate any restriction at all on abortion with sexist backlash and the oppression of women. But times change and wise editorial writers must change with them if they are going to promote the handful of prominent pro-abortion Republicans—Sen. Specter of Pennsylvania (remember the Clarence Thomas hearings when this same *Times* made "Specter" a synonym for sexual harassment?), Gov. Weld of Massachusetts, Gov. Wilson of California, Gov. Whitman of New Jersey (already the subject of a fawning piece in the *New Republic* proposing her as a vice-presidential candidate).

The most interesting feature of the disingenuous editorial, however, is not its promotion of unlikely Republicans, but its unstated admission that if the *Times* is to have any national influence, it must influence the Republican Party. If the editorial writers actually believed that the nomination of a pro-life slate of Republicans would split the party and give the Democrats a chance to keep the White House, they would be doing all they could to equate the Republicans with the pro-life position. You know the Democrats are in trouble when even the *New York Times* abandons hope for them. Politically astute Republicans will read the editorial as confirmation of the fact that the pro-life card is an electoral winner, and that Democrats are worried that Republicans will play it.

FT

PHILISTINES LEFT AND RIGHT

As originally envisioned, the National Endowment for the Arts was supposed to pay for professional, big-city companies to put on an occasional production of *Our Town* in Fargo, or *La Bohème* in Tallahassee, or Beethoven's Fifth in Oklahoma City. It was supposed to pay for borrowing some paintings from the Smithsonian and sending them around the country every once in a while, and for Robert Frost or Edna St. Vincent Millay to go out for a semester and teach poetry to the heartland. In a rich country with a weak knowledge of art, this was possibly a laudable goal—though perhaps a little too confident of government's power to legislate things like aesthetics and a little too sure of the nineteenth-century dogmas of man as perfectible and art as universal religion.

The NEA failed to reach its goal, however, not just because it was dumb enough to finance the infamous *Piss Christ*, the anti-Catholic propaganda of homosexual activism, along with Robert Mapplethorpe's sadomasochistic sex photographs, but because it became somehow seized by the wrong-headed notion that art is good only when it sets itself against the political and social status quo. Once this notion had taken hold, the NEA found itself in the ridiculous position of either promoting what it thought was bad art or asking the taxpayers to pay for art that deliberately insulted them. Usually the NEA held its nose and promoted that bad old, bland old, socially acceptable art, but occasionally it broke out and promoted the art of self-congratulatory complaint—and now (as the NEA sees it) the philistine Congress is howling for its blood. Why, asks Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri, should Americans "subsidize an assault on their values, religion, or politics"? The NEA answers that we should subsidize it because it is good art that would not exist without government support. But that is obviously false to anyone with a sense of what art is supposed to aim at (Mapplethorpe's photographs are not beautiful, only shocking). The answer reflects the apparent conviction of the NEA that what makes art is that it *does* assault and shock prevailing American values, religion, and politics. We should subsidize art because it annoys us to

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subsidize it, and the extent to which we resent a subsidy is exactly the extent to which we know it a work of art to be worthy of subsidy. Good medicine, we learned as children, tastes awful.

This, in our view, is a particularly dim-witted view of art, a view that denies art is about anything other than its political and social effect. But, as the recent debate about "zeroing out" the NEA has revealed, the real crisis of art in the United States is that too many people—on the left and the right—share that view. There is, as Martha Bayles puts it, a "Philistine Consensus" between the detractors and the defenders of the NEA. "It is no longer possible to find a broad-minded, historically informed view of Art. Instead, each side has capitulated—each in its own way—to the philistine notion that art is necessarily about power: that all works of art, including the world's great masterpieces, are best understood as either attacks on the established social order or defenses of it. . . . When right-wing philistines dismiss all art as elitist, they only fortify the left-wing caricature of art as a function of power: class power, race power, gender power."

"Instead of restructuring the way we pay for the arts," Bayles continues, "we need to restructure the way we think about them." She is wrong that we don't need a different way to promote the arts. The NEA is probably too infected with the "art as power" view to be capable or even worthy of reform, and in the present situation of the arts no successor organization would be any better. But she is certainly right that our fundamental problem with the arts—the problem that makes it impossible for the original purpose of the NEA to be fulfilled—comes from forgetting what art is supposed to be about: beauty, truth, and that sort of thing. Great art has an elusive quality that cannot be captured by any social "purpose"—whether that purpose be to soothe or assault. Government is singularly incapable of discerning the elusive.

FT

The Creative Team Plays It Again

The glow of self-satisfaction in "The Arts" section of one of our local papers is particularly pronounced after a generous application of Crème de Sleaze. This morning it's a glowing story by Bill Carter, a *Times* culture writer, on Barbra Streisand's production of "Serving in Silence." This is another "docudrama"—meaning truth trimmed to the message—and it's about Col. Magarethe Cammermeyer, who was dismissed from the National Guard because she admitted to being a lesbian. When Streisand read about the dismissal in 1992 her indignation was sparked, and she immediately called her producing partner and said, "We have to do something about this. We have to tell this story." She invited Col. Cammermeyer to her mansion in Los Angeles and reports, "When I met her I was totally impressed. She had great dignity and integrity. She is such a handsome woman." Ms. Streisand signed up Glenn Close to play the colonel in the NBC production. The story continues. After meeting the colonel, Ms. Close says, "I was very, very impressed by her." A little short of "totally impressed," but impressive nonetheless.

As a producer, Ms. Streisand reflects a firm sense of duty. "'I care about social issues,' Ms. Streisand said. 'And the way I can speak out is in my work.'" Only the callous could remain untouched. The producers know that some may think the film controversial, but Ms. Streisand explains that it is really about "love and work and family." Mr. Carter agrees: "Indeed, the main focus of the film is on Colonel Cammermeyer's relationship with an artist named Diane, played in the film by Judy Davis." They love one another, they both work, and they make a lovely family, so the film is obviously about love and work and family. The effusion continues: "Both Ms. Streisand and Ms. Close praised Ms. Davis' performance. 'She was sublime to work with,' Ms. Close said. Playing a love story opposite another woman was not hard, she said, because 'I basically think if you fall in love with somebody, the feeling of love is the same.'" Faced with sentiments and writing of that quality, it is hard to deny the educational effectiveness of Oprah and her like as mentors of our popular culture.

Ms. Close's worry was whether she "could get the military bearing because [Cammermeyer] is so tall and I'm so short." Indeed, Col. Cammermeyer has been described as Amazonian, but Ms. Close managed to look military enough in a manner that it used to be safe to describe as more ladylike—and less likely to get in the way of the message. Ms. Streisand says that she is also very, very impressed by "the overwhelming power of television." At a preview of the film in midtown, it was said that the film would be viewed by thirty million Americans and would be a great "education" for the American people on lesbian, gay, and transgender issues. Mr. Carter reports, "Much of the attention that has surrounded 'Serving in Silence' has focused on a scene late in the movie in which Ms. Close tenderly kisses Ms. Davis. Ms. Close said NBC did not raise a single objection to the scene. Still, she said, 'We walked a very fine line. For network television you can only push the envelope so far.'" The frisson of artistic daring takes the breath away.

Maybe in the next production the network will let

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"the creative team" (that is really what they are called in the little world of television) put in the touching of a breast, and then the touching of a naked breast, and after that who knows what the creative possibilities are? Mr. Carter tells us that Ms. Streisand would like to do other films that "explore some related themes." An example given by Ms. Streisand is "the issue of basic human values." It's about time somebody explored that issue. Ms. Streisand will be doing it in a movie version of Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart.* Mr. Kramer is the founder of ACT-UP, a homosexual organization that promotes protest as perpetual obnoxiousness, and the subject of the play is the much neglected question of AIDS. Does this woman's courage have no limits? But that's the kind of thing you can expect from a person who is not afraid to come right out and declare, "I care about social issues." We are, as she might say, totally impressed.

Of course some conservatives, especially those religious right types, will object to the decadence of Ms. Streisand's efforts, and that will only confirm her in the delusion that she is daringly avant garde. And if someone explained to her that he objected not so much to the decadence as to the artistic dreck and moralistic drivel, it is doubtful that she would get it. Dreck and drivel, to judge by the *Times,* is where it's at in the glowing world of "The Arts."

FT

. . . AND AGAIN

The woman is indefatigable. Fresh from her brave and daring production of "Serving in Silence" (see above), Barbra Streisand has now appeared at the JFK School of Government at Harvard to speak on "The Artist as Citizen." Preaching to the zealous choir, Ms. Streisand presented herself as the last liberal: a woman on the side of the angels and George McGovern against the dark forces of Hitler, Stalin, and Newt Gingrich. "I'm proud to be a liberal," she declared, and praised the brave political stance of her own movie, *Yentl.* Equating censorship with attacks on the funding of artists by the NEA, she warned that Congress is about "to weaken the very foundation of democracy." Finally, she gave us this take on recent American history: "During the riots of the sixties, when people tried to explain the inexplicable, Aretha Franklin sang simply what was being asked for, 'R-E-S-P-E-C-T.'" We remember that song as being a hardworking woman's warning to a philandering husband, but no matter; the political theories of deep-thinking actresses find their natural poetic expression in the lyrics of the golden oldies of sixties' soul music.

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THE UGLY FACE OF "JUSTICE"

He received from the French government the Croix de Guerre, is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, served as a cabinet minister under Pierre Mendes-France and Charles de Gaulle, and was awarded for his bravery in the Resistance against the Nazis. None of that matters. When he was a young man in his early twenties, from 1940 to 1942, André Bettencourt wrote anti-Semitic articles for a German-supported paper. Mr. Bettencourt, now seventy-five, does not deny he wrote the articles and says that, when he recognized the error of his ways, he tried to make up for the wrong by joining the French Resistance. "I have repeatedly expressed my regrets concerning them in public and will always beg the Jewish community to forgive me for them," he says. But none of that matters, either.

Because no legal action can be taken against him in France, French Nazi hunters have come to the U.S. to get our Justice Department to punish Bettencourt by prohibiting him from entering the country, much as was done with Kurt Waldheim, erstwhile UN General Secretary and President of Austria. (A prominent industrialist, Bettencourt frequently has business in the U.S.) Pressed on whether it is accurate to describe Bettencourt as a war criminal, Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld stated at a New York news conference, "He's guilty of writing." His colleague Jean Frydman said, "After these terrible findings [of the anti-Semitic articles], we knew we were talking about a Nazi collaborator who is a very powerful man in France. We are going to show him that there is no amnesty for the past."

Leaving aside the question of whether there can be amnesty for anything but the past, this is yet another in a sordid series of instances in which unbridled vindictiveness disguised as a passion for justice has done great wrong. More than fifty years ago a young man in his twenties spouted an evil doctrine. He soon repented of it and lived an exemplary life thereafter. Never mind. "We are going to show him," says Mr. Frydman. "He's guilty of writing," says Mr. Klarsfeld. Perhaps these two, rather than Mr. Bettencourt, should be put on the Justice Department's "watch list" of people to be kept out of the country. Jean Frydman, according to the *Times,* "said they were pressing their case in the United

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States because there was no legal mechanism in France for prosecuting Mr. Bettencourt for writing propaganda." The First Amendment notwithstanding, the French enforcers and the Justice Department seem to think there is such a mechanism in the U.S.

The Department's Office of Special Investigations says it is "reviewing the allegations" against Mr. Bettencourt after being pressured by Governor Pataki and Senator D'Amato of New York. This is madness of a high order. At the behest of a couple of fanatical Frenchmen, leading politicians suggest that the government of the U.S. should punish a French citizen for something he did in France fifty-three years ago. In the memorable phrase of Mr. Klarsfeld, "He's guilty of writing." In New York, of all places, one might think such a charge would not be given the time of day. New Yorkers who wrote propaganda for Hitler—of whom there are still some around—or for the genocidal policies of the Soviet Union—of whom there are a great many around—might think of moving to France where, according to Mr. Frydman, there is no legal mechanism for feeding the insatiable appetite for vengeance. In this country, it is to be feared, the Office of Special Investigations has become such a mechanism.

FT

While We're At It

■ Bear me witness. I said in that February comment that I was not a first-class Latinist. That did not prevent several readers—John Marshall Prewitt, attorney at law in Mount Sterling, Kentucky, was first in line—from rubbing it in by pointing out that some Latin dictionaries do contain "annuncio" (or "annuntio"). So, and although its usage is uncommon, I was wrong in saying that "annuncio" is not a Latin world. Joining in the general eagerness to confirm me in my humble estimate of my proficiency in Latin, a distinguished professor from Duke pounces on my phrase in the same issue, "nineteenth-century abolitionists redivivus." "If they are plural," he writes, "they are redivivi." He is right only if every dictionary in this house is wrong in indicating that "redivivus" has long since been adopted into the English language. But enough of this pedantry. It is something of a comfort, however, to learn that Latin is not quite a dead language, at least not among the readers of this journal.

■ In a full-page ad in the *Times*, Planned Parenthood protests violence at abortion clinics and declares that pro-life leaders "have the lives of these innocent victims of violence on their consciences." "In speech after speech, sermon after sermon, on endless placards paraded at endless protests, they encourage their followers to hate their neighbors. . . . The clearest example occurred when New York's John Cardinal O'Connor issued a backhanded apology for the attackers by stating 'you cannot prevent killing by killing,' thereby labeling abortion providers as killers." As Lincoln observed of those who blamed him and his party for the violence of John Brown and Nat Turner, the critics will not be satisfied until the opponents of slavery declare slavery to be right. People cannot be required to say what they know to be contrary to fact. Every honest person knows that abortion is the killing of a human life. The disagreement is over when, if ever, abortion is justified. The Planned Parenthood ad concludes: "Yet it is clear to any sensible person that these killings will not stop until the Right's rhetoric of war and murder ends." It is not clear, but it is quite possible, that the killing of abortionists will not stop until abortionists stop killing. What certainly will not stop and cannot stop is the honest naming of the deed, namely, killing, whether done by abortionists or by those who violently oppose them.

■ If you don't live in Manhattan, it's not a big deal. In fact it's not a big deal for most of us who do. But on the Upper West Side, where Fidel Castro and his like are still believed to be the wave of the future, it was a sensation. On January 29, at the Methodist church of St. Paul and St. Andrew (which also holds religious services between such meetings), three hundred Democratic Party activists gathered in a "Town Meeting to say No to Newt [Gingrich]." On the panel were such as Gloria Steinem, Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, and Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun*, who describes himself as a "leader in Jewish thought." It may be remembered that a couple of years ago Lerner was billed, and self-billed, as the guru behind the "politics of meaning" espoused by Mrs. Bill Clinton (formerly Hillary Rodham Clinton). It seems that Mr. Lerner and the Clintons do not get along very well these days. In fact, White House sources insist that Lerner only met with Mrs. Clinton once, two years ago for fifteen minutes, and "never spoke to her or anyone else around here since." The politics of meaning, it would appear, turned out to be another of the Administration's bloviations that did not strike a chord with a public that is skeptical of the government's ability to provide much of anything worthwhile, never mind the meaning of existence. Whatever the reason for the alienation between Mr. Lerner and the White House, he told his startled audience, "You and I will spend the rest of our lives, until the day we die, dealing with the betrayals of the Bill Clintons and that type of human being." According to Lerner, "The differences between him and the Republicans are not worth your spending the next two years

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fighting for." Gloria Steinem dissented: "I think Bill Clinton is a better President than we deserve." Which may be true in the case of many people. Jim Wallis, who lives in the District of Columbia, took a somewhat different tack, pointing out to those assailing Republican welfare reform, "We have to face the fact that many of these programs have failed." The faithful at St. Paul and St. Andrew were not getting what they came for. In response to concerns about the human catastrophe of the inner cities, however, Mr. Lerner had a solution: "What we're calling for is an empathy track in the schools. Empathy should be made part of the curriculum. First towards other countries. Then towards the other, whoever that may be. By the middle grades, we can teach empathy for other kids. By the upper grades, and this is difficult, we'll teach empathy for parents. Now that's very different from what liberals say." But after his attack on the Clintons, the Upper West Side was not empathizing with Michael Lerner. That did not ruffle a man who is looking at the big picture: "This is meant to be a vision for a several-hundred-year campaign. That's not what interests me. It is the difference between whether you see God as the important force in the universe, or the Clintons. What happened between us wasn't important. The struggle I'm talking about is a struggle that's been going on for 3,000 years, since Moses. That's the politics I care about." Ah yes, Hillary Clinton, I remember giving her fifteen minutes back in the late twentieth century.

■ Mr. William Waldegrave is Minister of Agriculture in the UK, and he and his family have to be given police protection against possible terrorist attack by animal rights activists. That is because they hold him responsible for the British export of calves to the continent, where they are slaughtered in a manner of which the activists strongly disapprove. Without getting into the merits of the particular protest, the passions engaged by the animal rights cause are a cause of continuing wonder. Charles Moore, writing in the *Spectator*, has some thoughts on the subject that should not be dismissed out of hand. In fact, they contain a certain ring of truth: "Until recent years, those who enjoyed venting moral outrage against the institutions of the society in which they lived could do so in the name of the proletariat. The proletariat was too large, too distant, too poor, and too ignorant to have much say among the counsels of those who protested in its name. You could use the cause of the workers as the channel for your hatred of your parents or housemaster or other representatives of authority confident that the workers would not answer back. Now that has changed. Workers have cars and own houses and do answer back. They are no longer exploited enough to be interesting: indeed, they have a nasty way of catching up with your own standard of living. So it is time for the caravan of protest to move on, and it finds that it can park most safely among animals. Here is a whole world of creatures who will *never* answer back. And whereas the relations between men and men cannot always be relied on to rest on exploitation, those between men and animals can. There is a heady prospect of eternal wrong, of grievance without end, of screaming at Mr. Waldegrave and his successors to the crack of doom, of being able to hate humanity and feel good about doing so at the same time."

■ A new little wrinkle on an old prejudice pops up in one column or news report, and pretty soon you note its appearance all over the place. The old prejudice is that Pope John Paul II is something awful. For fifteen years it was because he is a right-wing reactionary curmudgeonly authoritarian Pole who doesn't understand the American Church and is trying to roll back the wonderful reforms of Vatican II. But now his book sells in the millions, many more millions buy a compact disc in order to pray the rosary with him, and in Manila he attracts what is undoubtedly the largest audience for any event in human history. But he is still something awful. He is winsome, compelling, and, ugh, very popular. He has become a celebrity, has given birth to a personality cult, and is thus centering the Church upon himself and undermining the rightful role of bishops, priests, and, above all, the laity. Here is the version of the new wrinkle offered by *Boston Globe* columnist James Carroll in a comment occasioned by the Pope's book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*: "His large-hearted goodwill, his breadth of knowledge, his passionate commitment to the Catholic Church, his personal history of integrity, and his longing for more humane structures of society are all vividly on display in this book. Nevertheless, I read it with a gnawing sadness and a growing awareness that this man, for all his virtues, and, ironically, perhaps because of them, embodies the tragedy of contemporary Catholicism." The Pope, says Carroll, has turned hope into hype, joining the world of O. J. Simpson, Madonna, and other celebrities who "have their existence apart from—they think above—the communities in which the rest of us live." The Pope, by becoming a celebrity, can no longer speak credibly about the failings of the modern world for "he has embodied its most basic flaw—that of rampant individualism, the glorification of the autonomous self that always comes at the expense of the community." Mr. Carroll tries, but he cannot maintain the tone of someone who admires John Paul II and is sorry that he makes the mistake of communicating too effectively. Instead of reading the Pope's book, he says, we should all be reading the new book by Hans Küng, *Credo: The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today*. Carroll concludes: "It is a brave, stirring statement of Christian belief for the postmodern era by the greatest living Catholic theologian, and also, not

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incidentally, the present pope's strongest critic. The tragedy of Catholicism? That Hans Küng, whom the Vatican tried to silence, has not all these years been pope." The new wrinkle in John Paul II-bashing was an interesting little ruse while it lasted.

■ Midnight basketball or death. Those would seem to be the only alternatives, according to Dan Rather on the CBS *This Morning* program of January 26. Of a youth in the ghetto Rather said, "He has hope of staying out (of a gang) as long as he has a basketball in his hands. . . . Without the basketball this kid is running drugs, carrying a gun, and soon to kill somebody. And that's true in place after place. Now we get to decide: Do you want a basketball in his hands, to continue trying to convince him to stay out of a gang, or do you want to face him in a dark street some night with a nine-millimeter Glock in his hands?"

■ Readers who remember the World Council of Churches (WCC) and National Council of Churches (NCC) may be interested to learn that, after holding hearings around the U.S., these bodies are filing a formal complaint with the United Nations that charges the U.S. with the crime of "systemic racism." Deborah Robinson of the WCC's Program to Combat Racism told a reporter who had caught this development that the concept of human rights is "not understood" in the U.S. Compared with, for instance, Russia, Serbia, Rwanda, Singapore, and China? Never mind, she may have a point. The NCC has been trying to come up with a statement on human rights and is running into all kinds of problems. James O'Dea of Amnesty International worries that the draft statement lacks a clear affirmation that human rights are universal. James Finn of Freedom House, a New York-based human rights organization, criticizes the draft for not anchoring human rights in moral truth. "For example," he notes, "after a section on theological and biblical understanding, the drafters say the Church doesn't claim 'to perceive truth more clearly than others.' Surely, this is an amazing statement. The sturdiest foundation for human rights is that each person is created in the image of God." According to Finn, the draft "leaves the term 'human rights' to function almost like a catchall for whatever social concerns the NCC might want to use to fill in the blanks." Canadian human rights scholar Paul Marshall observes of the NCC draft, "Comments on political, civil, social, and economic rights are combined with rights to ecology, peace, communities, and identity in promiscuous abandon. . . . The authors appear never to have met a right they didn't like. All human concerns are treated as human rights concerns, and this attenuates the term so it becomes contentless." The NCC may not be able to define human rights, but it knows the U.S. is violating them. No doubt the delegates of the 181 (or is it 188 this month?) countries at the UN will bring some needed clarity to this discussion.

■ My friend Peter Steinfels at the *New York Times* (yes, I do have friends at our parish paper) has been on the case of the neoconservatives since we were both writing with quill pens. Some years ago the neocons talked a lot about "new class theory" as a way of understanding the sociological structure of the culture wars. In his "Beliefs" column, Mr. Steinfels, with obvious glee, reports a new book that allegedly shoots that theory out of the water, Steven Brint's *In An Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton). Mr. Brint has some interesting things to say about professionals, but his argument doesn't lay a glove on new class theory. As Peter Berger, one of the main architects of the theory, remarks, "Nobody ever said that all professionals or even most professionals are new class. An industrial engineer and a professor of postmodernist literary criticism are both professionals, but only the latter is relevant to the theory. In fact, the whole theory turns on the distinction between those who are and those who aren't producers and purveyors of symbolic knowledge." Actually, there is not so much debate about new class theory today, not because it has been discredited but because its key insights have been so widely accepted. That will not keep Peter Steinfels from finding another stick with which to beat the neocons. It's thankless work, but somebody has to do it.

■ Dr. Lynne Boughton writes to clarify a comment here to the effect that she was denied a position because she was "too Catholic." "The central story," she writes, "is that the Illinois Department of Human Rights investigated my charges against DePaul and issued in June of 1994 three findings of 'substantial evidence' that DePaul practiced illegal religious discrimination by excluding me from a faculty position solely because I believe in the teachings of the Catholic Church." The university, she said, claimed exemption from nondiscrimination laws because its purpose was religious, but was unable to demonstrate that. The difference between DePaul and other thoroughly secular schools that were once religious (Yale, Harvard, et al.), according to Dr. Boughton, is that DePaul continues to claim that it is a "religious" and, more specifically, "Catholic" institution.

■ Even the *New Republic* seems a little skeptical of Frances Kissling, the generally confused person who heads the oxymoronic "Catholics for Free Choice." In an article in the late February issue, reporter Jennifer Bradley finds plenty of proof that Kissling is pro-abortion, but very little that she's a Catholic. Somewhere, Kissling seems to have picked up the bizarre, extra-canonical notions that (1) if you can

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get five theologians to admit your position is possible, then it's OK to hold it despite explicit condemnation from the Church; (2) the Church's less-than-perfect record of stands on other moral issues such as slavery makes it theologically legitimate to dissent (and vehemently encourage others to dissent) from the Church's position on abortion; and (3) the Church makes a hard-and-fast distinction between human life and personhood, which leaves room for abortion. Kissling had left the Church for some years until she was invited to join the board of her present organization—at which point she discovered she was a Catholic after all. Of sorts.

■ I know you've been waiting for this. We now have, courtesy of researcher Albert Menendez, the breakdown on the religious affiliation of members of the 104th Congress: "Catholics number 148, up 12 from the prior Congress. Next come 68 Baptists (+4), 63 Methodists (-6), 59 Presbyterians (+2), 49 Episcopalians (-1), 34 Jews (-8), 23 'Protestants' (+2), 21 Lutherans (-1), 13 Mormons (+2), 12 United Church of Christ (-2), 6 'Christian' or 'nondenominational Christian' (+5), 5 Christian Scientists (+1), 5 Eastern Orthodox (same), 5 Unitarian-Universalists (-2), 3 Assemblies of God (+3), 3 African Methodist Episcopal (-1), 2 Church of Christ (-3). The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Reformed Church, and Seventh-day Adventist Church supply two members. United Brethren in Christ, Christian Church and Churches of Christ, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene, and Pan African Orthodox have just one. Five members specify no religious affiliation." Obviously, the Pan African Orthodox are overrepresented.

■ Even while President Clinton presses for trade agreements with China, the Chinese government's many violations of religious freedom and human rights have received at least occasional notice in the American press. But equally disturbing violations by the Vietnamese government have received almost no notice, though trade embargoes against Vietnam have been lifted and movement toward diplomatic recognition continues. The Puebla Institute—a lay Catholic group that monitors international religious freedom and human rights—has issued a report that documents the imprisonments, tortures, church demolitions, and murders with which the Marxist government oppresses religion despite Vietnam's public agreement with UN declarations on religious freedom. American negotiators have found, in Vietnam's recent free market reforms and desire to enter the world economy, the leverage to demand information about American soldiers missing in action or killed during the Vietnam War. With the same leverage, argues the Puebla Institute, government negotiators and private businesses in contact with Vietnam ought to demand that the Vietnamese honor the international standards of human and religious rights to which they have agreed. Having handed the U.S. one defeat thirty years ago, Vietnam, with the help of U.S. business, is now of the verge of defeating America's international commitment to human rights. This small nation has an impressive track record of humiliating what is putatively the most powerful country on earth. Copies of the report may be obtained for $10 from the Puebla Institute, 1319 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

■ A reader from Atlanta writes to propose that we compose a parody of "a liberal, big city newspaper," and includes for possible parodying a recent editorial from the *Atlanta Constitution*. Praising the decision of the medical school accrediting board to require students in obstetrics and gynecology to be trained to perform abortions, the *Constitution* demands even more: not just that students be trained in abortions, but that the students—upon graduation—be compelled to perform abortions. "Regardless of one's personal opinion, abortion is a legal procedure. No obstetrician-gynecologist should be permitted to hang out his or her shingle without offering the full range of services to which women are entitled." (A similar demand is made in a recent editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.) We'd like to offer a parody of this denial of rights in the name of rights, but, in the face of reality, we are at a loss.

■ In a recent editorial, the British medical journal the *Lancet* has denounced the Catholic Church's interference in the UN population conference in Cairo (on which see George Weigel in FT, February 1995). The *Lancet* takes Pope John Paul II to task for his bad biology (in thinking conception is an event), his bad politics (in relieving French Bishop Gaillot), his bad faith (in not mentioning birth control during his sermon in the Philippines), and—most interestingly—his erroneous interpretation of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas (I confess I couldn't quite follow the editorial's argument on this last point). Though much is made of disagreement by some Catholics with their Church's position on abortion and birth control, the problem still seems to be that many Catholics agree with the Pope, and that only a change at the top will bring them around. Rest assured, however: the forces of history are on the side of abortion. Quoting themselves from 1993, the *Lancet*'s editors assure us, "There is little doubt that the next Pope or the Pope after him/her will support family planning." Doctor friends assure us that the *Lancet* is frequently well informed on medical subjects.

■ In an open letter to the American bishops, the Society of Catholic Social Scientists warns: "A separate 'gay spirituality' regrettably is being

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encouraged, and gay ministries tell us that a person who suffers from the homosexual disorder has special 'gay gifts' for the Church." Recent trends in American ministry that contradict the Church's natural law teaching on homosexuality include the notion that being gay is a blessing from God, the idea that homosexuality is not disordered, and the pastoral practice of actively discouraging persons from attempting to change their homosexual desires. All these trends derive from an understanding of homosexuality as biologically determined—an understanding, the society claims, that is contrary to the best available scientific evidence. "We must respond with great compassion toward homosexual individuals, but it is essential that this compassion not lead to a contradiction of Church doctrine. Gay ministries have been confusing us with demands for understanding—on their terms—and approval, but we must be clear in asserting the truth." Critics persist in disparaging as old-fashioned the adage that we should hate the sin but love the sinner. The reason it has been around so long, however, is that the only alternatives to it are hating the sinner or loving the sin, neither of which can be squared with Christian morality.

■ "Recently at the hospital where I am a physician," Dr. George Dietz writes from Chicago, "a fourteen-year-old girl, a week and a half short of being five months pregnant, had changed her mind about . . . keeping her third and final appointment at a nearby abortion clinic [and] asked if I could remove the laminaria that had been inserted at her previous clinic appointment. From a telephone conversation with an employee of the clinic I soon learned that the operative procedure had been performed by a person with neither a medical degree nor a medical license. Moreover, from the young girl herself I learned that at the clinic she had been given tetracycline, an antibiotic that is contraindicated in pregnancy. . . . This medication had been prescribed even though a woman has a legal right to change her mind about an abortion up to the last moment. . . . Although no parental consent had been required for this fourteen-year old to initiate the risky mid-term abortion, nevertheless, ironically, her parents had to accompany her to the hospital to give their consent to the removal of the laminaria from their daughter." The least attempt to regulate abortion clinics, to demand that abortionists meet normal medico-legal standards of informed consent and full disclosure (especially with children), is greeted with howls of protest by the proponents of choice. But only under the supposition that she *ought* to have an abortion is it possible to give a pregnant woman medication that damages the fetus while the woman still has the legal right to change her mind, and only under the supposition that she *ought* to have an abortion is it possible to allow a fourteen-year old to initiate an abortion without parental consent while preventing her from stopping the abortion without parental consent. The language of choice is utilized by the pro-abortion forces to defend a denial of choice. It is a curious notion of children's rights that, in the case of a pregnant child, is limited to the right to kill.

■ At the end of February, Atlanta hosted a big dinner honoring Archbishop Iakovos, head of the 1.5 million-member Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. It is his fortieth year as a bishop and as representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the World Council of Churches (WCC). The purpose of the dinner was also to help raise $10 million for the Faith and Order program of the WCC and the National Council of Churches (NCC). The dinner came at a time when the Archbishop could do with a boost. In December there was a flurry of press attention given a meeting at Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, convened by Iakovos, in which the ethnically fragmented Orthodox churches in North America agreed to form a common Orthodox organization that could, inter alia, provide Orthodoxy with a more united public profile. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul) was not pleased. Patriarch Bartholomew and others saw it as a play for independence from Constantinople, and issued a sharp rebuke to Iakovos and his colleagues, declaring that "the Patriarchate repudiates all the initiatives taken at the meeting in Ligonier for having overstepped its authority and states that it in no way recognizes any of its decisions which are opposed to the pan-Orthodox proposals and directions [regarding Orthodox churches in the Diaspora.]" Having received assurances of continued obedience from Archbishop Iakovos and others, a press release from Constantinople dated January 31 declared, "The matter is considered by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to be closed." The whole affair has been a great embarrassment for Orthodox leadership in North America, and most particularly for Archbishop Iakovos. There is no word on how much money was raised at the Atlanta dinner, but we hope folk were generous; both because Archbishop Iakovos could use a lift and because Faith and Order, which focuses on Christian unity, is the one program of the WCC and NCC that still deserves a measure of support.

■ We had not anticipated the remarkable response to the symposium on Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, published a while back. It seems half the readership wrote in to give the correct interpretation of the story. I exaggerate, of course, but the story and the symposium sparked an astonishing array of responses. Now Sister Bernadette Counihan of the Franciscan Sisters of Christ the Divine Teacher in Davenport, Iowa, sends a sheaf of little essays written by their third and sixth graders on *The Giving Tree*.

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From the third grade, Heather Bender writes, "I think the tree was very nice and sort of a little funny. She would've been a good friend for me if I were always lonely and had no one to play with." Heather Langhehr: "The boy acted like he was selfish and unthankful because he didn't say please or thank you. But in the beginning he was nice." Tracy Kremer: "The boy was kind of nice as a little boy but mean when he was big and he left for a long time." Peter Braun: "At first I thought it was funny but then it got sad. The boy wasn't playing on it. And he chopped it down. I think it was a good book." Chad Reicks: "I think the guy wanted too much stuff, and I think it was nice that the tree gave the stuff to him." Elena Schafer: "The tree gave everything. She was sad. Then he came back and he asked for a peaceful place. She lived there, so he stayed there." Sarah Botkin: "The boy was funny and ful of wishes and a playful a apple eater a climber a good swinger a good hider a sleeper a leaf maker a playful boy." [sic] By the sixth grade the perils of the examined life set in. For instance, Corie Powell: "The athor's message was if a person loves you they will probely do anything for you." Megan (no last name): "What kind of person is the boy? The boy is a wanting person." Rodney Cummins in response to the question what does he think of the boy: "He likes to take stuff." Another paper without a name says, "The Authors messeg is not to cut down trees." Jessica Hopkins says the message is, "If you try to get everything you end up with nothing." Tony Gardner had a different take on the story: "The author's message is that if you give somebody something that they want, they will come back again, and again until you have nothing left." Mary Tounsley is obviously of the no-nonsense school: "The boy is a person that needs to get a job and is greedy he should of said no thanks to the sweet tree." As for Sister Bernadette, she concludes from the exercise that *The Giving Tree* is definitely a story that children should read.

Sources: Jean Bethke Elshtain on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *dialog*, Winter 1995. On Rutgers University President Francis Lawrence, *U.S. News & World Report*, February 20, 1995; *Wall Street Journal*, February 22, 1995; *New York Times*, February 11, 1995. On GOP's pro-choice majority, *New York Times*, February 19, 1995. Martha Bayles on the *NEA*, *New York Times*, January 30, 1995. On André Bettencourt, *New York Times*, February 22, 1995. Bill Carter on Barbra Streisand, *New York Times*, February 2, 1995.

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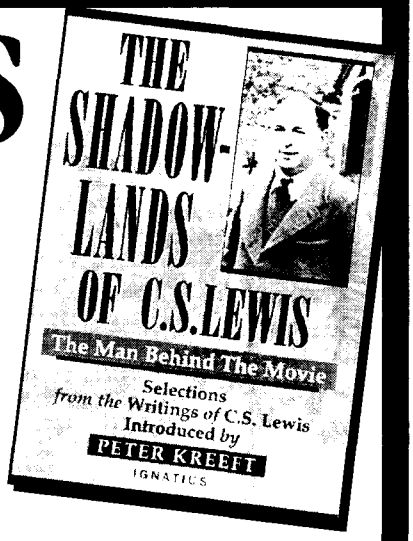

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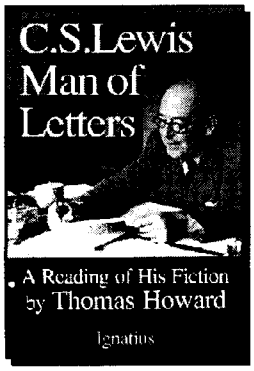

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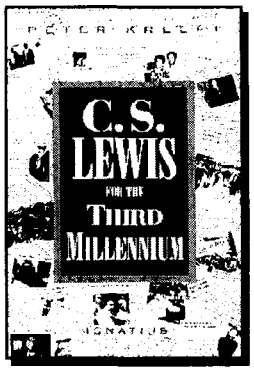

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